

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JEFFERSON DAVIS: A COMPARISON  
OF CIVIL WAR COMMANDERS IN CHIEF

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fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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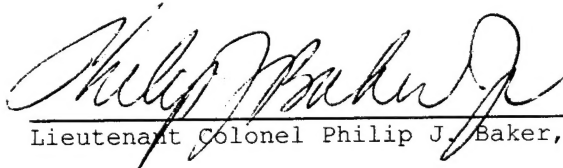
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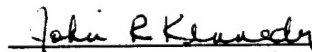
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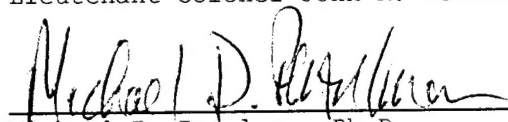
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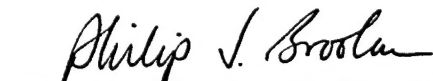
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## ABSTRACT

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JEFFERSON DAVIS: A COMPARISON OF CIVIL WAR  
COMMANDERS IN CHIEF by LCDR Michael S. Trench, USN, 133 pages.

This is a study of the effectiveness of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis as Commanders in Chief during the Civil War. It begins by comparing their backgrounds prior to assuming the Presidency; then comparing their military strategies and command structures. The final area of comparison is their involvement in the first military draft in American history.

Davis had extensive government and military experience, but exhibited personality traits early on that later hampered his performance as a war-time Commander in Chief. Lincoln had very little experience, but excelled at dealing with people.

Lincoln tried several staff arrangements before finally appointing Grant as General in Chief. Davis changed his structure very little throughout the war. Although he appointed Lee as General in Chief in the first year, he lost his services by placing him in command of a field army.

Both faced strong challenges from a powerful governor over the draft. Davis first tried to win over the governor, then appealed directly to the people. Lincoln publicly kept distant from the draft and worked behind the scenes.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

When the Civil War began in 1861, the Confederacy seemed to hold one very definite advantage over the Union, its Commander in Chief. A graduate of West Point and commander of a regiment in the Mexican War, Jefferson Davis had led more men in combat than most generals on either side. Additionally, he compiled a distinguished record in the House of Representatives and Senate and served as Secretary of War under Franklin Pierce. His military and political records were matched by few men in the country when the war broke out.

The Union, on the other hand, was led by Abraham Lincoln. A lawyer from Illinois, Lincoln brought a total of three months' military experience to the White House. He had served only one term in the House of Representatives and four in the Illinois State Legislature. While the two seemed incredibly mismatched to lead their governments into war, the war itself proved otherwise. From their different backgrounds, each brought different strengths and weaknesses into office. Neither man wanted a war; but once it began, both had their own ways of dealing with the multitude of problems they faced.

Of the many functions a President performs, the role of Commander in Chief during war is arguably the most difficult. Clausewitz agreed; in *On War*, he said "the demands for intellectual and moral powers are vastly greater . . . a commander in chief must also be a statesman, but he must

not cease to be a general."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln and Davis struggled to maintain this balance for four years. While both had successes and failures, there would be only one victor. How effective were Lincoln and Davis as Commanders in Chief?

Two assumptions were necessary to begin this study. First, in order to compare the job performance of any two individuals, the jobs they perform must either be the same or equivalent enough to provide a worthwhile means of comparison. The United States Constitution uses the following description: "The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States and of the Militia of the several states when called into actual service of the United States."<sup>2</sup> The Confederate Constitution, which borrowed heavily from that of the United States, used the same definition. A strong argument can be made that Davis's position was considerably more difficult than Lincoln's because of the Confederacy's commitment to states' rights. While this is true, Lincoln also had to contend with states' rights; the Republican platform in 1860 specifically addressed the conservation of states' rights. Balancing national interests against the rights and interests of the states was a difficulty both men faced throughout the war.

The second assumption is that victory in war is not the sole qualifier of an effective Commander in Chief. Once it was assumed the comparison could be done, the next step was to decide what categories would be used to measure the performance of the two Presidents. If victory is the only real measure of effectiveness, then it is pointless to continue. It must be assumed that Jefferson Davis could have been an effective Commander in Chief, or could have been effective in some aspects and still lost the war.

The Civil War is probably the most well-documented war in American history. A large amount of literature is available on nearly every important figure. This is especially true regarding Abraham Lincoln. Every aspect of his presidency has been analyzed; his leadership style alone has been the source of several books. These works are almost unanimous in their praise of his character and abilities, and most authors consider him a model as President and Commander in Chief.

The opposite is true regarding his counterpart, Jefferson Davis. While many works have been written about him, he has not inspired the same volume of works or respect as Lincoln. Authors vary widely on their opinion of Davis, most tending to think he was an ineffectual leader. This is especially true of books written in the first thirty-to-forty years after the Civil War; most authors blamed Davis for all the ills of the Confederacy. Since then, a few have tried to present a more balanced picture of the President of the Confederacy.

A possible problem area then, is the bias in most works dealing with these two men. Some works on Lincoln take on an almost reverent tone. Many recollections of people of the time are likely colored by their grief over his assassination. Davis presents a different case; he was blamed for everything from starting the war to plotting the assassination of Lincoln. The plan to work around this bias is to use primary sources and recent works as much as possible. The main source of information for this study is the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Another possible source is the papers of both men. Each has an extensive collection, but these are not a primary focus of research due to the difficulty in gaining access to them. While these are no doubt the best

source of information, time constraints will not allow efficient use of these documents.

A necessary limitation of the study of wartime Presidents is the lack of clear-cut standards of effectiveness. Of the many who have served during times of war, no two approached the job in the same manner. Each had their own interpretation of the role of Commander in Chief. Levels of personal involvement in routine decisions, staff and command structures varied widely. The first task was to review existing works dealing with the President as Commander in Chief. These were mostly collections of biographies, but more than sufficient for the purposes of this study. Three books were especially useful: James R. Arnold's Presidents Under Fire: Commanders in Chief in Victory and Defeat, Warren W. Hassler's The President as Commander in Chief, and Ernest R. May's The Ultimate Decision. These cover every war-time President up to and including George Bush. While none of them broke out specific areas of performance and applied them to each President, they did provide some common areas of performance to use in this study. Each of these books included a chapter on Lincoln; and although only James R. Arnold discussed Davis, he devoted a significant portion of his book to him. He points out several crucial errors by Davis, but presents one of the most unbiased pictures of him as Commander in Chief. All three books also deal extensively with James Polk and his role as Commander in Chief during the war with Mexico. Polk's interpretation is crucial to the views of both Lincoln and Davis as they were both in Congress at the start of the war. Polk kept a firm grasp on all operations during the war, sending orders to generals in the field as well as tracking the most minute details of the war effort. It was a marked departure from



previous administrations and set the precedent for all subsequent Presidents, including Lincoln and Davis.

This paper will focus on three areas of comparison: background, military strategy and command structure, and the draft and how each man handled challenges from one of their governors. These are necessarily subjective, but representative of the duties of Commander in Chief.

Examining the backgrounds of each man is particularly important in this case. The education, military experience, and political experience of both men were drastically different. Judging by any standard, Davis was far more qualified for the position than Lincoln. Examining their backgrounds can give some insight into how they arrived in office, and what strengths and weaknesses each brought with him.

The Commander in Chief is responsible for the overall military strategy in times of war. The system we use today to develop and implement national military strategy is based on experiences of the past. Lincoln inherited a structure when he took office, and Davis was forced to build one from the ground up. A comparison of their systems to our current one can show what lessons were learned during that war, and how they influenced the way the American military system operates today. The two sides in the Civil War had very different national goals, and the proper use of military power to achieve them was the primary responsibility of the Commander in Chief. The strategies they developed were different, and changed throughout the war in response to changes in the military and political situation. Their military strategies can be examined considering their different goals, and effectiveness measured by how well they addressed these goals. Examination of the strategies themselves is not sufficient, however; the methods they used to communicate this down the chain of

command are equally important if not more so. Each man tried different combinations of staffs and command structures throughout the war; examining this process is important to determining their effectiveness as Commanders in Chief. A fundamental measure of effectiveness is "whether the commander in chief's strategic vision can still be recognized at the sharp end."<sup>3</sup>

The final area of study is their relationship with the governors of the states concerning the drafting of men into federal service. Although the Confederacy was dedicated to states' rights, both men had to deal with the problems of the states. The states had to be protected; no governor would sit idly by while enemy troops were allowed to march unchallenged through his state. Both men presided over a military growth unprecedented in American history, and relied on their states to supply the manpower. As the number of volunteers dropped, both instituted a system of conscription. This was an unpopular measure, and each faced a strong challenge from a powerful governor. The methods used by Lincoln and Davis to work with these governors was another important part of their role as Commander in Chief.

The study of any President in times of war is worthwhile. The role of Commander in Chief of the United States Armed Forces is unique. While the legislative branch of the government retains the power to declare war, the President holds supreme command over all the armed forces. Every President has very definite ideas of the limits of his power, and most of these are formed by the actions of his predecessors. The role of Commander in Chief today is interpreted very differently than it was when Lincoln and Davis took office. Since the definition in the Constitution has not changed, any differences reflect the attitudes and interpretations of the men who have held the job.

The Civil War was an especially important period in the expansion of the powers of the Commander in Chief. Abraham Lincoln faced challenges unlike any of his predecessors, and took unprecedented measures to perform his duties as he understood them. His counterpart, Jefferson Davis, faced many of the same challenges. Both men were elected officials and could not deal with problems as a monarch or dictator. They were required to work within the laws of their governments, and were often accused of subverting those laws. The Civil War offers a rare opportunity to study two leaders of similar governments and how they dealt with the problems of command of their Armed Forces.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 109.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Constitution, art. II, sec. 2.

<sup>3</sup>James R. Arnold, Presidents Under Fire: Commanders in Chief in Victory and Defeat (New York: Orion Books, 1994), x.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUNDS

The two men who led the United States into civil war began their lives in much the same manner. Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis were both born in log cabins in Kentucky, separated by eight months and less than one hundred miles. From these similar beginnings, their lives went in completely different directions. Davis's family moved and became more prosperous, Lincoln's family also moved but did not. Davis attended various schools from the age of eight to twenty-one, Lincoln attended about one full year of formal school during his entire life. Davis was very familiar with federal government, Lincoln served only one term in Congress. Understanding the experiences that shaped them on their way to assuming the Presidency is critical to understanding their approach to the problems they faced.

#### Jefferson Davis

Jefferson Davis was born in Christian County, Kentucky on 3 June 1808, the youngest of a large and very close farm family. His father, Samuel Davis, was a moderately successful tobacco farmer and horse breeder. The family lived in one of the better log cabins in the area; two cabins connected by a breezeway with glass windows.<sup>1</sup> As the youngest, he was the favorite of the family, and he wrote often of the great affection he received as a child.

The family moved when Davis was two, briefly to Louisiana, then to Mississippi. His father became a cotton farmer and the family began to prosper. His father owned a few slaves, but worked in the field with them. Since there were few good schools in Mississippi, Samuel decided to send Jefferson to Kentucky when he was old enough to attend school. At the age of eight, he enrolled him at St. Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic school run by Dominican priests. Davis was the youngest student at the school, and the only Protestant. Davis attended St. Thomas for two years, until his mother could convince his father to allow him to attend a local school in Mississippi. Jefferson returned home alone on a steamboat at the age of ten.

Back in Mississippi, Jefferson briefly attended Jefferson College near Natchez before entering Wilkinson Academy. It was here that he first displayed the temperament that would be a trademark later in his life. When the teacher assigned a piece to be memorized, Davis considered it too long and refused. The next day, when threatened with a whipping for his failure, Davis left the school and walked home. His father, rather than forcing him to return, told him if he was not in school he would have to work in the field. Davis did this for one day, before deciding that school was better than work and returned.<sup>2</sup>

In 1823, at the age of fifteen, Davis enrolled in Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. This was one of the best schools in the country at the time, with a law school, medical school, and a larger enrollment than Harvard.<sup>3</sup> Little is recorded of his time at Transylvania, only that he belonged to a debating society and gave the commencement address on "Friendship," which was praised by the local papers.<sup>4</sup> Lexington was a much more sophisticated environment than the region of Mississippi

where Davis grew up. The city was prosperous, and the surrounding countryside was home to fine race horses. This was Davis's first experience with the Southern aristocracy and society, but one can only speculate on its influences on him. He never kept a diary during this time, nor did he write much about the school later. He appeared, however, to acquire some expensive tastes, evidenced by later letters to his brother asking for money as a cadet at West Point.

While at Transylvania, Davis was surprised to find that his father and brother Joseph had obtained an appointment for him at West Point. Davis had never expressed a desire to attend West Point or to join the military; he planned to graduate from Transylvania and attend law school at the University of Virginia. He would have refused the appointment, but his brother convinced him to try West Point for a year. After that, he could leave and enroll at the University of Virginia if he still wished to. He accepted the appointment on 7 July 1824.

Davis entered West Point on 30 September 1824 at the age of seventeen. Here he first met some of the men who later held key roles in the Confederate Army, Albert Sidney Johnston, Leonidas Polk, and later Robert E. Lee and Joseph Johnston. Davis was not a model cadet at West Point. He was arrested and court-martialed his first year for being in Benny Haven's tavern. He was sentenced to dismissal, but the court recommended exoneration due to his previous good conduct. Davis was arrested again on Christmas Eve, 1826, for attending an eggnog party. There was a riot after the party by a group of cadets against the officers, but Davis was not part of this. For attending the party, he was confined to his quarters until 8 February. He also accumulated an impressive amount of demerits, including such offenses as:



visiting during study hours, having long hair at inspection, failing to keep his room in order, spitting on the floor, absence from reveille, absence from class, making unnecessary noise during study hours, firing his musket from the window<sup>5</sup>

Davis graduated West Point ranked twenty-three of thirty-two cadets. He was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant of infantry in January 1829. He was assigned to Fort Winnebago in the Michigan Territory, where he served as assistant quartermaster. He contracted pneumonia during his first winter there, very nearly dying. This was his first episode of poor health, a problem that plagued him later in life. Davis's wife Varina wrote that Davis and Robert Anderson (who later defended Fort Sumter) actually swore in Abraham Lincoln as a captain of the militia during the Black Hawk War.<sup>6</sup> While this makes for good irony, there is no other evidence to support her story. There is some debate whether Davis ever saw action in the Black Hawk War, but he did lead a detachment guarding Black Hawk and some of his warriors. Black Hawk later praised Davis for keeping a mob away from him and his men in Galena, Illinois.

Davis gave an indication of his thoughts on states' rights in 1832. South Carolina nullified federal tariffs, and Congress passed a Force Bill, allowing the federal government to use force if necessary to collect the tariffs. Varina Davis quoted her husband's view:

looking the issue squarely in the face, I chose the alternative of abandoning my profession rather than be employed in the subjugation or coercion of a State of the Union<sup>7</sup>

After the Black Hawk Wars, Davis returned to life as a frontier soldier and was assigned to a regiment in Fort Jackson, Arkansas. In 1835, he was charged by his commanding officer with conduct subversive to military discipline for an incident of insubordinate conduct. He was tried by a court martial and testified passionately in his own behalf. He asked

the court "Can it be required of a Gentleman, is it part of the character of a soldier, to humble himself beneath the haughty tone, or quail before the angry eye of any man?"<sup>8</sup> The court ruled in his favor.

Davis resigned his commission on 30 June 1835. He had fallen in love with Sarah Taylor, daughter of Colonel Zachary Taylor, who was opposed to his daughter marrying an officer. They were married; but on a visit to his sister in Louisiana only three months later, both contracted malaria. Sarah died, and Davis was seriously ill for more than a month. He would suffer recurring attacks of malaria for years after, another of his bouts of ill health. The death of his wife devastated Davis, and he remained in seclusion at his brother's plantation for seven years.

Politics gradually drew Davis out of his seclusion in 1842. He became an active Democrat and ran for the Lower House of the Mississippi Legislature. He lost the election, but remained politically active. He was a presidential elector at large for Mississippi in the election of 1844, and campaigned extensively for James Polk. He was erratic in his speeches, sometimes stiff and uninspiring, sometimes very persuasive. The Democrats nominated him for Congress in 1845, and he was elected to the House of Representatives, receiving the second highest popular vote. He served only a few months before resigning to serve in the Mexican War, but became known as an ardent expansionist, supporting the expansion into Oregon, California, and Texas. He also continued to be plagued by poor health, experiencing problems with his eyes. Sometime before 1850, he would eventually lose sight completely in his left eye, the probable result of a corneal ulcer or glaucoma.

He resigned his seat in Congress to serve in the war with Mexico, volunteering against his second wife's wishes to serve in the Mississippi

militia. He was elected Colonel of the First Mississippi Rifles, a volunteer regiment of gentleman warriors looking for an adventure. These were men much like Davis himself; mostly wealthy men who brought their slaves with them, and rode into battle wearing red shirts, white pants, and black hats. They were, however, excellent marksmen, and Davis ensured they were outfitted with the latest in percussion rifles. He was a stern disciplinarian, but his men were devoted to him. He first led them in action under his former father-in-law, General Zachary Taylor, at the Battle of Monterey. Davis and the First Mississippi Rifles were involved in the storming of Fort Teneria and Fort Diablo.

Davis's most famous moment came at the Battle of Buena Vista. Santa Anna faced General Taylor with a four to one superiority, demanding a surrender. When Taylor refused, Santa Anna attacked, and Taylor's left flank began to give way. Taylor ordered Davis to attack. Davis, who had been wounded in the foot earlier, rallied his men and some volunteers from Indiana who had broken earlier and stopped the attacking Mexicans. When the enemy cavalry attacked again, he arranged his men into a "V" formation, with the open end facing the enemy. The Mexicans rode into the formation, and Davis's men destroyed them. He would later be criticized for the "V" formation, but regardless of the tactical merits of his performance, he showed incredible bravery and leadership in the face of a greatly superior enemy force. He was justly proud of the performance of his regiment and took great insult to any slight directed at him or his tactics. He even challenged the colonel of the Indiana volunteers to a duel for his comments on the "V."

He returned to Mississippi to a hero's welcome, and was offered Brigadier General of the Mississippi reserves by President Polk. Again

suggesting his opinions on states' rights, he refused on the grounds that it was a state appointment, and the President had no authority to make it. The wound he sustained kept him on crutches for two years, continuing his health problems.

In August 1847, Davis was appointed by the governor of Mississippi to serve out the term of the late Senator Jesse Spreight. In January 1848, the Mississippi state legislature unanimously elected him to a full term of his own. Davis served as Chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, and became a very vocal defender of the Southern states and slavery. Davis stated several times in the Senate that he did not believe slavery was a permanent institution, but it was an "institution for the preparation of that race for civil liberty and social enjoyment."<sup>9</sup> However, he deeply resented the North, especially New England, meddling in the affairs of southern states. He voted against every provision of the Compromise of 1850 except the Fugitive Slave Act. On 17 November 1850, Davis responded to a series of questions on the Compromise posed to him in a Woodville Mississippi, newspaper called the Republican. Davis called for a state convention to prepare for armed defense of the state if necessary, and a convention of slave states to win Northern guarantees of Southern states' rights. Failing these guarantees, he said that peaceful separation was the only answer.<sup>10</sup>

In September 1851, Davis resigned his seat in the Senate to run for governor of Mississippi. He preferred to remain in the Senate, but the Democrats convinced him to run to prevent Mississippi from accepting the Compromise of 1850. Davis lost a close election, and after was accused of being a secessionist by his opponent.

Davis returned to his home in Mississippi for fifteen months before returning to politics. He was offered the position of Secretary of War by President Franklin Pierce on inauguration day. He served for Pierce's entire term and was considered a very successful Secretary. Probably remembering his own experiences, he urged fewer forts and larger detachments for the frontier soldiers. He went to Congress to increase pay, accelerate promotions, and provide pensions for widows and orphans. In 1855, he sent a commission, including then Lieutenant George McClellan, to Europe to study the Crimean War. He also promoted government weapon manufacturing instead of reliance on private companies.

At the end of Pierce's term of office, the Mississippi legislature again elected Davis to the Senate, and he entered the day after Pierce left office in 1857. He became one of the more vocal defenders of the Southern states, joining in the heated debates in Congress during this period. Although completely opposed to any interference from the northern states, Davis was not among those favoring a quick secession after Lincoln's election. However, when Mississippi seceded, Davis left the Senate defending his state with one last long and eloquent speech.

In his farewell, he began by reminding Senators that he had always believed the sovereignty of a state gave it the right of secession. He reaffirmed his commitment to his own state saying:

If I had thought Mississippi was acting without sufficient provocation, or without an existing necessity, I should still, under my theory of the Government, because of my allegiance to the State of which I am a citizen, have bound by her action.<sup>11</sup>

He went on to say that the principles of the Declaration of Independence "have no reference to the slave," and the forefathers affirmed this by charging George III with attempting to cause insurrection among the slaves.

They also provided for the slaves as property in the Constitution, and considered them equal to only three-fifths of a free man when determining the number of representatives a state could have. He concluded by saying the Government and the principles on which it was founded had been "perverted," and while this forced Mississippi to declare independence, he wished for peaceful relations.<sup>12</sup>

#### Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born on 12 February 1809 in Hodgeville, Kentucky. His father, Thomas Lincoln, was a moderately successful farmer, and both his mother and father were illiterate. Abraham spent his first seven years growing up on the farm, only occasionally attending a local school when he could be spared from farm work. His father moved the family to Indiana in 1816 after losing most of his land in title disputes. The family had a difficult life the first few years in Indiana. They spent their first winter in a cabin with only three sides closed in; a fire was kept burning at the open end to provide heat. Lincoln attended school again that winter, the last formal schooling he would ever receive. Lincoln later estimated that he spent less than one year in school, quite in contrast with Jefferson Davis. In 1818, an epidemic swept through the area, killing many settlers, Lincoln's mother among them. His father remarried in 1819, and his new wife became very fond of Abraham. He remained close to her throughout his life, unlike his relationship with his father. Lincoln and his father were never close; later, when notified by his brother of his father's illness and impending death, Lincoln replied that seeing his father again would "be more painful than pleasant."<sup>13</sup>

Lincoln's family moved to Illinois in 1830, where he got his first job. Along with one other man, Lincoln was hired to pilot a flat boat down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. After his return, he was offered a job helping in a general store in New Salem, Illinois. He was popular in New Salem, considered cheerful and strong, but also lazy. New Salem was a rough, frontier town; and Lincoln soon attracted the attention of a group of local rowdies called the Clary's Grove Boys. Their leader's name was Jack Armstrong, and he challenged Lincoln to a wrestling match. This was quite an event in the town; many people came to watch and place bets. Lincoln beat Armstrong, then fought several of his men who jumped in to help their leader. Armstrong called them off and congratulated Lincoln. The Clary's Grove Boys became Lincoln's close friends, later serving in the militia with him.

Lincoln's first foray into politics was as a candidate for the Illinois State Legislature in 1832. His campaign was interrupted by the Black Hawk Wars, when he joined the militia for a thirty-day stint. He was elected captain, mainly because the Clary's Grove Boys joined with him and all voted for him. The militia was a loose organization; Lincoln once wrestled another captain for choice of campsites. He was arrested twice during his short stint in the militia; once for shooting his gun in camp, and again when his men raided the quartermaster's stores and made off with the liquor. As punishment for the latter, he was forced to wear a wooden sword as a sign of an officer who could not control his men.<sup>14</sup> When his thirty days were up, he reenlisted as a private for twenty days and again for thirty days. During his eighty days in the military, Lincoln saw no combat and only one Indian, an old man with a safe conduct pass. Some



accounts tell of Lincoln saving the man from death at the hands of angry militiamen, but later authors consider the story more legend than fact.<sup>15</sup>

Lincoln resumed his campaign after the Black Hawk Wars, making several speeches in the New Salem area. Accounts of him during this campaign paint a colorful picture; tall and thin, wearing an old straw hat, calico shirt, and pants much too short held up by one suspender. He lost the election, carrying New Salem but only finishing eighth of thirteen candidates. After his initial venture into politics, Lincoln entered a partnership running a general store. The store failed, and the partner died leaving Lincoln with over one thousand dollars of debt. He eventually paid all of it back, finally clearing the debt when he was a Congressman in 1847. Lincoln got a job as Postmaster and supplemented his income by surveying, farming, and taking on odd jobs. He was not very successful and was sued for debts.

Lincoln ran for the State Legislature again as a Whig in 1834. He was elected this time and served four consecutive terms. During his term, he was not particularly noteworthy in the Legislature. He voted mainly for internal improvements like canals. He continued as Postmaster and surveyor between sessions, and began studying law. He had taught himself enough to be certified by the Illinois Bar in 1836. Also during this time, Lincoln ended his courtship of Mary Todd; breaking their engagement in late 1840, only to change his mind and marry her in November 1842. He wanted to run for Congress at the end of his fourth term, but was not nominated by the Whigs.

Lincoln left politics for a short period after the end of the 1843 session. He began practicing law in Springfield, going through two partners in a fairly short time before settling on William Herndon. The

firm of Lincoln and Herndon became very successful, although the two lawyers were noted for their lack of organization and cluttered office as much as for their court room skill. Lincoln was unable to stay out of politics, however; campaigning for the Whig party in 1844, and elected to the United States Congress on the Whig ticket in 1846.

Following the Whig platform, Lincoln vigorously opposed the Mexican War. His first important speech in Congress was against the war, and along with other Whigs he introduced various measures designed to embarrass President Polk. None of these were popular back in Illinois, and Lincoln was not nominated by the Whigs to run for a second term. During his tenure in Congress, Lincoln again showed no great potential. He was a good party man, but generally stayed out of the anti-slavery debates that were going on. He did, however, vote for free states in Colorado and New Mexico and drew up a bill to free the children of slave mothers born in Washington, D.C., but never proposed it.<sup>16</sup>

Out of politics again in 1849, Lincoln settled into law practice as a circuit lawyer. His partnership with Herndon was flourishing, and he was becoming a well-known lawyer. He was especially good at arguing before a jury. Herndon recalled one case in particular: he and Lincoln represented an old widow of a Revolutionary War soldier who had half her pension withheld by an unscrupulous pension agent. Lincoln closed with a meandering speech, discussing the start of the war, then Valley Forge, then describing the old soldier as a young man kissing his young wife and child goodbye to go off to face these hardships. After bringing the jury to tears, he tore into the defendant. The jury ruled in favor of the widow for the amount asked. Lincoln's notes for the closing argument were:

No contract. -Not professional services. -Unreasonable charge.  
Money retained by def't not given by pl'ff. -  
Revolutionary War. -Describe Valley Forge privations. -Ice .  
Soldier's bleeding feet. -Pl'ffs husband. -Soldier leaving  
home for army. -Skin Def't. - Close.<sup>17</sup>

Lincoln even asked Herndon to stay for the closing, obviously knowing he would enjoy the performance.

He followed the slavery debates, as did most everyone else at the time. While believing the Compromise of 1850 was a reasonable solution, he entered politics briefly again in 1854 to oppose Senator Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lincoln was galvanized by the Kansas-Nebraska Act as never before. He gave speeches around the state, condemning the spread of slavery into new territories. Lincoln was elected to the State Legislature in 1854, but resigned his seat two months later to become eligible for a United States Senate seat, elected by the Legislature. Lincoln lost the election and again returned to law. He was approached during these few months by the new Republican party, but considered them too radical.

Lincoln returned to traveling the circuit, but kept his hand in politics. Joining the Republicans in 1856, he was nominated for Vice President on the first ballot, but lost on the second. Lincoln was now firmly in the anti-slavery camp, disagreeing particularly with the Dred Scott decision in 1857. He was nominated for the Senate by the Republicans in 1857, running against Stephen Douglas. This campaign was marked by their famous series of debates, which brought Lincoln much recognition. Lincoln never spoke out on abolishing slavery where it already existed, he wished only to stop the spread into new territories. Lincoln again lost a close election, but had made a national name for himself. He was nominated for President by the Republicans on the third ballot at their convention in 1859, and elected President on 6 November 1860. His well-known opposition

to slavery prompted the secession of South Carolina on 20 December 1860, followed shortly after by six more states.

### Conclusions

Lincoln and Davis brought unique qualifications to their jobs as Commander in Chief. Davis's were obvious; most of his adult life was spent in the government or the military. He had military and political experience, and organizational and administrative skills that Lincoln sorely lacked. He was also very proud and could be stubborn, a fault that many authors describe at great length. However, T. Harry Williams pointed out that Davis was perhaps the consummate "southern man," and was no more proud or stubborn than his contemporaries.<sup>18</sup> Also of interest in Davis's background is the fact that he rarely had to campaign for office. In his time, Senate seats were elected by state legislatures. The only two elections Davis lost were his two attempts at state offices, both of which were popular votes. For all his time in public office, he never really developed a sense of how to deal with people.

Lincoln was almost a polar opposite to Davis. He had very little military experience, and his political experience was limited almost exclusively to state office. Whereas Davis was well respected, Lincoln was initially considered incapable of assuming the Presidency by many in Washington. Lincoln himself knew better; his years as a stump speaker and trial lawyer gave him valuable experience in understanding people and knowing how to influence them. He could use his image as an "uneducated bumpkin" to put people at ease, or to put them off their guard. His greatest strengths were Davis's greatest weaknesses.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Clement Eaton, Jefferson Davis (New York: The Free Press, a Division of MacMillan, Inc., 1977), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Robert McElroy, Jefferson Davis: The Real and Unreal (New York: Harper and Brother Publishers, 1937), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Eaton, Jefferson Davis, 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>6</sup>McElroy, Jefferson Davis, 26.

<sup>7</sup>Varina Howell Davis, Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by his Wife (New York, 1890), vol. I, 200; quoted in Eaton, Jefferson Davis, 17.

<sup>8</sup>Jefferson Davis, "Autobiographical Sketch," in The Papers of Jefferson Davis, eds. H. M. Monroe Jr. and J. T. McIntosh, vol I (Baton Rouge, 1971), 379; quoted in Eaton, Jefferson Davis, 19.

<sup>9</sup>Eaton, Jefferson Davis, 69.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>11</sup>Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government (South Brunswick: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd, 1958), I:221.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 224-225.

<sup>13</sup>Philip Van Doren Stern, ed., The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), 331.

<sup>14</sup>T. Harry Williams, Two War Leaders: Lincoln and Davis (Springfield, IL: The Abraham Lincoln Association, 1972), 10.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>17</sup>Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, Lincoln (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1992), 85.

<sup>18</sup>T. Harry Williams, Two War Leaders: Lincoln and Davis (Springfield, IL: The Abraham Lincoln Association, 1972), 10.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### DAVIS: MILITARY STRATEGY AND COMMAND STRUCTURE

Military strategy involves the highest of the three levels of warfare. It is, or should be, determined by civil-military interaction at the highest levels and gives overall direction to the nation's war effort. Von Clausewitz defined it as "the use of engagements for the object of the war."<sup>1</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff use the following definition: "the art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force."<sup>2</sup> Both definitions take a similar approach to the definition of military strategy; it is a means of achieving a national goal or objective.

In the Civil War, both Lincoln and Davis were responsible for their national military strategy. Each side had very different goals: Davis and the Confederacy wanted to survive as a nation; Lincoln sought to dissolve the Confederacy and restore the Union. Planning and implementing their strategies occupied the majority of their time in office, and is the main determinant of their effectiveness as Commanders in Chief. It also had an impact on the way military strategy is determined today. Both men used much trial and error to turn their goals into a recognizable strategy, then to communicate this to their generals. Some of the methods that worked for them are still used today.

National military strategy today is derived from the National Security Strategy. The President is responsible for the National Security

Strategy, and is assisted in the development by several government agencies. The main body in this organization is the National Security Council. It was created by the National Security Act of 1947, and is responsible for coordinating national security policies between the various government agencies. The National Security Council has four statutory members: the President, Vice-President, Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of State. Serving as advisors to the council are the Director of Central Intelligence and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Congress, while not directly in the National Security Council organization, serves an important role in the process through several Constitutionally defined roles. The Senate approves the President's high level appointees, such as Secretary of Defense, and has the sole power to ratify treaties. The Congress as a whole retains the responsibility to declare war, raise and equip armies, and maintain a navy.

In 1861, none of the previously described mechanisms were in place. Although some similar positions existed, such as Secretary of War, they were not as strictly defined as today. Prior to the Civil War, the President ran all aspects of a war from the White House. James Polk was a good example of this type of Commander in Chief during the Mexican War, and both Lincoln and Davis had the opportunity to see him in action. Polk gave a perfect demonstration of Clausewitz's definition of a Commander in Chief, perfectly melding the roles of statesman and general. He knew when the war started what his goal was: more territory for the United States. He knew exactly how to use the military to achieve those goals. He had a deep mistrust of his General in Chief and field commander, Winfield Scott, and because of this did not discuss strategy or any other military affairs with him early in the war. Polk performed many routine duties himself, and



relied more on Senator Thomas Hart Benton for military advice than his General in Chief. Polk even went as far as choosing the sites for the Vera Cruz landing himself, before telling Scott of his plan.<sup>3</sup> This system took an extraordinary amount of time and energy, even with an Army of 30,000 men.

By the First Battle of Bull Run in the American Civil War, each side had that many men in the Virginia theater alone, not to mention tens of thousands more in other parts of the country. The greatly increased size of the military and the necessity of fighting over such a large geographic area made the type of command described above impossible for Lincoln and Davis.

Jefferson Davis began his tenure as Commander in Chief of the Confederacy with absolutely nothing, not even a military. He built up a government, fielded an army, developed a command structure, and formulated a military strategy in an amazingly short time. Elected by the Confederate Constitutional Convention on 9 February 1861, he had only five months until the First Battle of Bull Run. His previous experience served him well, and the fact that he had forces in place and could coordinate them well enough to defeat McDowell's advance in July is a credit to his organizational skills.

Davis had the same constitutional authority over the military as Lincoln. Not surprisingly, he set up his military command structure much like that of the United States. He appointed a Secretary of War, Leroy Pope Walker, and a Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R. Mallory. Mallory would serve Davis well through the entire war, but Walker was the first of a long line of Secretaries of War in the Davis cabinet. Davis probably

appointed Walker mainly for political reasons, and he resigned under pressure in September 1861.<sup>4</sup> He also appointed generals as chiefs of various administrative departments under the Secretary of War. These men, like the Quartermaster General, Surgeon General, Chief of Ordnance, and Chief of Engineers served more in an administrative role, not as operational commanders.

The goal of the Confederacy was to survive as a nation. This did not require winning the war, merely not to lose it. Davis himself seemed to have mixed feelings on the strategy he would employ to achieve this. On 16 February 1861, enroute to his inauguration, he told a crowd in Montgomery, Alabama, that the time for compromise had passed. He continued that the South would make all who opposed it "smell Southern powder and taste Southern steel."<sup>5</sup> He struck a more conciliatory note at his inauguration, saying the South's true policy was peace.<sup>6</sup> He reinforced this by sending a commission to Washington to negotiate with Lincoln. They remained in Washington for four weeks, but Lincoln refused to see them. His speech in Montgomery could be attributed to getting caught up in the wave of emotion immediately after secession, but in a letter to his brother Joseph on 18 June 1861, he said that if Virginia had been as united as the cotton states, "Perhaps we might now have been contending for the bank of the Susquehanna instead of retiring from the Potomac." He continued that he hoped to soon change from the defensive to the offensive, as it was the only way to teach the enemy its evils.<sup>7</sup> This would seem to indicate that he intended more than a mere static defense of the Confederacy.

Initially, Davis appears to have had no real strategic input from his cabinet or the military. He appointed no General in Chief until March

1862, when he appointed Robert E. Lee. This may have been a result of his poor relationship with General in Chief Winfield Scott when he was Secretary of War in the Pierce administration.<sup>8</sup> He appointed Samuel Cooper to the senior position in the Confederate military, Adjutant and Inspector General, but there is no evidence that Cooper provided any advice on strategy. Politics played as large a part in initial strategy as military principles. No Southern state would be content to allow Union troops to march freely through it, so Davis was obliged to defend every inch of the Confederacy, a large amount of land to defend with the small amount of troops at his disposal.<sup>9</sup> His plan to overcome this overall weakness was to use his advantage of interior lines and the rail system to move troops, concentrating to meet the advances of Union forces.

To accomplish this, Davis organized the military into regional commands, or departments roughly similar to the regional Unified Commands of today. The commanders of the departments were responsible for the defense of very strictly defined geographic areas. Davis intended to allow his commanders the necessary autonomy to run their own department, decentralizing command as much as practicable. He described his attitude toward the departments in 1863:

In the conduct of military operations in the various districts occupied by our forces a large amount of discretionary power is necessarily vested in the several department commanders.<sup>10</sup>

This method of command provided, at least in theory, defense for all the Confederacy.

Initially, Davis designated more than fourteen departments, and had the first system in place before the First Battle of Bull Run. These ranged in size from Beauregard's Department of Alexandria (three counties in Virginia) to Albert Sidney Johnston's Second or Western Department that

ranged from the Unaka Mountains in Tennessee to Kansas, and further on to Indian Country.<sup>11</sup> Davis soon found this to be too many separate commands, and consolidated many of them. By the winter of 1862-63, he had reduced the number to four; the Trans Mississippi Department, the Western Department, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida under a single commander, and Virginia and North Carolina also under a single commander.

#### First Bull Run

As stated above, Davis maintained overall command to direct the movement of troops to counter Union attacks. The first chance he had to test his strategy was the First Battle of Bull Run. This campaign was to set the example in the eastern theater for the next year and a half. Union troops under General McDowell advanced on General Beauregard, not successfully coordinating their advance with nearby Union forces, notably General Patterson's forces opposing General Joseph E. Johnston in the Shenandoah Valley.

Beauregard began wiring for reinforcement two days after taking command in Virginia, corresponding directly with Davis.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Johnston was in Harper's Ferry, also asking for reinforcements and ammunition. Johnston, however, was corresponding with General Cooper at Army Headquarters. This pattern of dual channel correspondence to Richmond from field commanders would continue throughout the war.

As the battle drew nearer, direct correspondence between Davis and the two generals became more frequent. The main topic was usually reinforcements; both Beauregard and Johnston wanted more, but there was occasional talk of strategy. On 22 June 1861, Davis wrote Johnston that Union forces may try to turn Beauregard, and that might offer him the

opportunity to make a flank attack.<sup>13</sup> In his book, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, Davis said when he was satisfied where the attack would take place, he told Johnston that he should make preparations for a junction of his and Beauregard's forces.<sup>14</sup> This is the only communication between the two that mentions him joining Beauregard, however; and it mentions nothing as specific as he states in his book. The first time Johnston was specifically told to plan a junction with Beauregard was on 17 July, when Adjutant-General Cooper sent a message to Beauregard, saying "if possible, send to General Johnston to say that he has been informed, via Staunton, that you were attacked, and that he will join you if practicable."<sup>15</sup> Another message, directly from Cooper to Johnston saying the same thing, is discussed later; but it is only a copy attached by Davis to the reports of both Johnston and Beauregard. There is no message directly to Johnston in the Official Records. Regardless of how he was notified, Johnston was able to join Beauregard in time to turn the tide and win an enormously important victory for the Confederacy.

Bull Run was Davis at his best; in five months he had built an army, planned a strategy, and effectively implemented it. He wrote, "For this movement we had the advantage of an interior line, so that, if the enemy should discover it after it commenced, he could not counteract it by adopting the same tactics."<sup>16</sup> He leaves no doubt who made the decision, writing two pages later "The great question of uniting the two armies had been decided at Richmond."<sup>17</sup> He clearly understood the concept of concentration on interior lines, and ordered it at the appropriate time.

This was also an example of some of Davis's less desirable qualities. Johnston wrote back to Davis, asking who would be in charge when he and Beauregard joined. Davis replied that Johnston was a general

and had all the power of that rank, and that he would know "how to make the exact knowledge of Brigadier General Beauregard . . . avail for the success of the object in which you cooperate."<sup>18</sup> Actually, this was not really the case. On 15 May 1861, Adjutant-General Cooper sent a message to Johnston appointing him a Brigadier General.<sup>19</sup> Johnston was still signing all message traffic as a Brigadier as late as 9 July, afterwards dropping the rank from his correspondence and signing telegrams with his name only. He was not promoted to General until August of 1861. The question from Johnston therefore seems perfectly natural, and Davis's dismissive reply was a foreshadowing of the poor relationship that followed.

After the battle, Davis joined Beauregard and Johnston at their headquarters. There was discussion of a pursuit, but none was ever made. Davis later recalled personally signing the order that night, but reports made in the press and in the Confederate Congress after the battle contradicted this. Davis was accused of obstructing the pursuit of a beaten enemy and interfering with the campaign plan of Beauregard. He spent an inordinate amount of time and energy attempting to clear himself of these charges. He argued over the wording of Beauregard's and Johnston's reports, attaching copies of the message sent to Johnston about joining Beauregard to his endorsement of their reports to dispute their versions. He disagreed that Johnston was told to join after sending away his sick, and that Beauregard had submitted a campaign plan at all. He also wrote to both generals and to Beauregard's aide to get copies of the campaign plan and ask their version of events the night after the battle. He was still fuming over the "injurious effect" of statements in the press in November.<sup>20</sup>

### Forts Henry And Donelson

When the spring campaigns began in 1862, the Union made a series of attacks in the western theater, commanded by Davis's friend Albert Sidney Johnston. Union General U. S. Grant began by advancing on Fort Henry, then on Fort Donelson. At approximately the same time, General Buell began to move on Nashville. This would point out a very clear contrast in the way Davis dealt with his generals. A. S. Johnston was a close friend of Davis, and Davis's correspondence with him had a drastically different tone than with Beauregard and J. E. Johnston.

To begin with, there was almost no direct correspondence between the two until the fall of both Forts Henry and Donelson. Davis had complete faith in Johnston, and felt no need to provide him guidance in any way. He later wrote:

So great was my confidence in his capacity for organization and administration, that I felt, when he was assigned to the Department of the West, that the undeveloped power of that region would be made sufficient not only for its own safety, but to contribute support if need be to the more seriously threatened East.<sup>21</sup>

From Johnston's assignment to command the Western theater in September 1861 until the end of January 1862, there is no direct correspondence between he and Davis; and then it is only a request for an inquiry into the defeat of General Crittenden at Somerset.<sup>22</sup> Johnston made all reports and requests through Secretary of War Judah Benjamin. This again shows the problem of information flow to Richmond. Of the three field commanders discussed so far, none reported regularly to the same person in Richmond. Beauregard wrote mainly to Davis, Joseph Johnston to General Cooper at Army Headquarters, and A. S. Johnston to Secretary Benjamin.

Like Beauregard and J. E. Johnston, A. S. Johnston began asking for reinforcements immediately upon arriving. He had a greater need than either of the other two, having only 27,000 men to cover Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Indian Country, and western Mississippi.<sup>23</sup> His force was spread extremely thin, and the Union recognized it. Grant attacked in early February 1862, taking Fort Henry on 6 February. Johnston notified Benjamin the following day, and Benjamin replied that Davis ordered him to break up Crittenden's army because it was demoralized. He said Johnston's performance in the face of a superior enemy "filled us with solicitude."<sup>24</sup> On 16 February, Fort Donelson fell, and Davis came under heavy pressure to relieve Johnston.

The concern in Richmond was evident in the messages sent to Johnston. More than two weeks later, there was still no official report from Johnston explaining the loss of Forts Henry and Donelson. This prompted a message from Benjamin, asking when he planned to submit one. Davis sent a message on 6 March, asking Johnston to send him frequent information concerning his condition and purpose.<sup>25</sup> Eight days later, apparently still waiting for the report, Davis sent an unofficial letter to his friend, expressing his concern over charges that Johnston was responsible for the loss of the forts. Davis wrote, "I have made for you such defense as friendship prompted, and many years of acquaintance justified" He also urged him to consider an offensive, saying that with the reinforcements on the way:

the audacity which the enemy exhibits would no doubt give you the opportunity to cut some of his lines of communication, to break up his plan of campaign, and, defeating some of his columns, to drive him from the soil as well of Kentucky as of Tennessee.<sup>26</sup>



Johnston's report finally arrived in Richmond on 18 March. He described the loss of Forts Henry and Donelson, and closed saying he hoped to join his Army with Beauregard's in time to defeat Grant and Buell. Davis replied with a letter quite unlike the petty bickering with his generals after Bull Run. He told Johnston "My faith has never wavered, and I hope the public will soon give me credit for judgement . . . You have done wonderfully well."<sup>27</sup>

For the next two months, Davis and Johnston exchanged correspondence more regularly; mainly exchanging reports of enemy movement and attempting to coordinate reinforcements. During March and April, Davis was very actively writing to the Confederate governors, trying to bolster the number of men in the Western Theater. Able to concentrate their forces before Grant and Buell joined, Johnston and Davis were confident of victory at Shiloh. After receiving word that Johnston had been killed and Beauregard was falling back to Corinth, Davis desperately appealed to the governors of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina for armed troops. His anxiety was evident in a reply to Georgia's Governor Brown; he gratefully acknowledged his reinforcements, saying pikes and knives would be acceptable armament.<sup>28</sup>

After the war, Davis wrote that Johnston's death changed the course of the war. While admitting that he was indulging in conjecture, he wrote, "the fortunes of a country hung by the single thread of the life that was yielded on the field of Shiloh."<sup>29</sup> But for all the faith he placed in Johnston, he did not attempt to change his strategy to compensate for the loss of his close friend. The Department of the West remained under a single commander, and was enlarged before the year was over. Davis

paid little more attention to the West after Johnston's death than he had before, usually occupying himself with affairs in Virginia and Maryland.

#### Peninsula Campaign

The biggest campaign of the spring and summer of 1862, and the one most occupying Davis's mind, was General McClellan's Peninsula Campaign. In March, Davis appointed Robert E. Lee as his General in Chief and advisor. This was the only time during the war that correspondence from the field came to one man in Richmond; almost all came through Lee. This was especially helpful during March and April, when defeats in the West diverted Davis's attention from the East. Lee and Joseph Johnston discussed troop movements to the Peninsula and strategy during these months; Davis was not directly involved until May.

As mentioned above, Davis appears to have been preoccupied with events in the West during March and April. In the East, Johnston was providing most of the ideas for conducting the Peninsula campaign. As early as 27 March, Johnston was asking to move his whole force to the Peninsula. Responding to a request from Lee to send 10,000 men, Johnston proposed moving the entire force since the number remaining would be too weak to defend his position anyway.<sup>30</sup> By 30 April, he was proposing an offensive because he felt they could not win on the Peninsula. He proposed that he cross the Potomac, while Beauregard moved to Ohio in the West.<sup>31</sup> Lee responded that the President concurred on the benefits of an offensive and desired to "carry it into effect," but nothing else was ever said.<sup>32</sup> Davis wrote the same day, asking Johnston to delay his withdrawal to prevent losses in the Navy yard.

As McClellan pushed toward Richmond, Johnston sent a series of messages to Lee between 1 and 10 May. Indicating that he was not in command of all forces on the Peninsula, he asked that this be changed. He told Lee he did not know who else was on the Peninsula, or who was in charge. To remedy this uncoordinated response to McClellan's advance, he proposed Davis order a concentration of all troops on Richmond.<sup>33</sup> Davis wrote Johnston the following day, not in answer to his proposal, but concerning the makeup of brigades under his command. He was especially concerned with keeping state regiments together, but also advised him he would organize "no less than four regiments to a brigade, nor less than four brigades to a division." Two weeks later, he would again write to Johnston about regimental composition, this time specifically discussing Mississippi troops. He told Johnston he was confident they would be more effective if kept together.<sup>34</sup>

During the period between these two messages, Davis wrote Johnston on two other occasions to discuss his plan of operations. On 17 May, he discussed the defense of Richmond, and he offered suggestions as to where the defensive positions should be set up. He told Johnston there was strong sentiment to see Richmond destroyed rather than allowing it to fall into enemy hands. He said Johnston's plan was good if the enemy kept on his expected path. He also stressed Johnston's authority to perform his mission as he saw fit, saying "As on all former occasions, my design is to suggest, not to direct."<sup>35</sup> One week later, he berated Johnston after a trip to Mechanicsburg. He found Generals Stuart and Cobb there; neither was in command there, and they told Davis they were not aware of any plan of operations. He told Johnston that a Union division could have easily gone "toward if not to Richmond."<sup>36</sup>

Davis displayed a definite lack of focus during this campaign. With enemy troops advancing on his Capitol, his messages to his field commander ranged from regimental makeup and organization to discussions of strategy where the possibility of destroying the Capitol is mentioned. Davis should have passed the administrative details to Lee or Cooper, but did not take full advantage of these men. This problem would not go away, partly because on 1 June 1862, Davis sent Lee to replace the wounded General Johnston as head of the Army of Virginia. Davis told Lee his new duties would temporarily interfere with the old ones, but never mentioned that Lee was to stop acting as General in Chief.<sup>37</sup> Lee remained at the head of the Army of Virginia for the remainder of the war.

With Lee in command, the eastern theater entered a new phase of Confederate strategy. Until now, the Confederate Army had been waiting for the enemy to move, then reacting to him. Lee really began the "offensive-defensive" policy of the Confederacy, using offensive maneuvers to draw enemy forces away from Richmond or to tie down reinforcements. While McClellan was marching to Richmond, General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was on the attack in the Shenandoah Valley. He was waging a legendary campaign, much to the concern of Lincoln. Lincoln began to divert troops in an attempt to stop Jackson, including some of General Banks' troops intended to reinforce McClellan. Lee and Davis considered reinforcing Jackson to further draw Union attention away from Richmond, but instead decided to reinforce from Carolina and Georgia, withdraw Jackson at the "last moment" quickly by rail and concentrate against McClellan.<sup>38</sup>

According to Davis, this plan had been developed earlier and was to have been executed by Johnston. They settled on it after a discussion about McClellan's most likely reaction when the attack began. Davis said

that the McClellan he remembered from his days as Secretary of War would attack Richmond when he realized Lee had weakened his defensive line in order to attack him. Then, referring to McClellan's overly cautious nature, Davis said:

If, on the other hand, he should behave like an engineer officer, and deem it his first duty to protect his line of communication, I thought the plan proposed was not only the best, but would be a success.<sup>39</sup>

Lee attacked on 26 June 1862 and, although losing the first battle because Jackson arrived a day late, drove McClellan back down the peninsula to Malvern Hill. McClellan withdrew skillfully, keeping most of his army intact. McClellan, however, was himself thoroughly defeated and would not threaten Richmond again.

#### Second Bull Run

In the fall of 1862, Lee was the driving force behind Confederate strategy. He kept in close contact with Davis from his field headquarters. While he referred administrative matters to the Army Headquarters, he kept Davis constantly informed of his movements and plans. Lee first proposed an offensive movement in August 1862, suggesting to Davis that they should change the theater to somewhere north of the Rappahannock. In two messages to Davis, he laid out the advantages of such a plan: avoid McClellan's approaching army, forage on enemy territory, and relieve other parts of the country.<sup>40</sup>

Davis had complete faith in Lee. He had driven McClellan off the peninsula from within a few miles of Richmond, saving the Confederacy the embarrassment of losing its Capitol. Davis illustrated this in a telegram sent on 26 August, discussing a concentration of troops to counter McClellan. Davis told Lee he was sending everything he had,

confidence in you overcomes the view which would otherwise be taken of the exposed condition of Richmond, and the troops retained for the defense of the capitol are surrendered to you.<sup>41</sup>

The two men planned Lee's move north in a series of messages during the first week of September. Again, Lee was the instigator of most of the ideas. His first proposal was to move into Maryland, due to the weakness of the Union troops in Virginia. He began modestly, proposing again to obtain forage and provisions, but also planning to threaten the approaches to Washington rather than attack the fortifications there. He also requested General Bragg send him reinforcements if he was unable to operate to any advantage in the West. Two days later, he added the goal helping the people of Maryland "liberate themselves" from Union oppression.<sup>42</sup>

Lee moved his troops into Maryland on 7 September, and wired Davis to ask for money and a prominent citizen of Maryland to liaison and help obtain supplies. He added that he did not expect a "general uprising of the people in our behalf."<sup>43</sup> Davis answered, instructing Lee to make a proclamation to the people of Maryland as the Commanding General, assuring them they had no desire to occupy the state. He outlined eight specific points he wanted Lee to include in his proclamation, among them encouraging the people to force the Union government to stop fighting or sue for a separate, "just and liberal" peace<sup>44</sup>. Lee made his proclamation on 8 September, and sent a copy back to Davis for him to verify against the points he wished to make. On the same day, Lee suggested to Davis this would be a good time to propose the Union recognize their independence. Coming just a week after their victory at the Second Battle of Bull Run; Lee believed it could not be mistaken as suing for peace, and that any

continuation of the war would then be the sole responsibility of the Union. Lee wrote the people could "determine at their coming elections whether they will support those who favor a prolongation of war."<sup>45</sup>

At the same time Lee proclaimed his message of freedom to the people of Maryland, General Bragg was issuing a similar proclamation to the people of Kentucky. Bragg advanced into Kentucky on the urging of Kentucky delegates to the Confederate Congress, who assured him that the people were ready to come over to the Confederate side. The idea for General Bragg's proclamation in Kentucky must have come from Davis. Lee made no mention of it, nor did Bragg until issuing it. Bragg's message to Kentuckians' was similar in content to Lee's in Maryland, albeit more romantic in its tone. The idea to make a two pronged political attack just before the mid term elections in the North was a master stroke, and worked to Confederate advantage at the ballots. Lincoln and the Republicans suffered fairly heavy losses, and were probably spared even more by the unfortunate timing of Lee's withdrawl after the Battle of Antietam. Although Lee never planned to occupy Maryland, his withdrawl after the bloody stalemate at Antietam gave the appearance of defeat. While no states or large numbers of troops had been won over to the Confederacy, the limited goals discussed by Davis and Lee at the outset of the campaign were achieved.

#### 1863: East Versus West

In the Spring of 1863, Davis had to make tough decisions concerning reinforcements between Lee and Johnston. The Western theater was a continuing problem for Davis; after the Battle of Murfreesboro there was a command crisis in General Bragg's Army. Davis sent Johnston to determine if Bragg had the confidence of his men in January, telling him to

do whatever was necessary to fix the problem. While not directing Johnston to maintain Bragg, Davis hinted that this would be preferable. He told Johnston that relieving Bragg would relieve him of Bragg's services, probably require more of his attention to that Army, and reminded him that there were not many people to choose from if he needed a replacement.<sup>46</sup>

In the eastern theater, Lee planned another movement north similar to the one he executed into Maryland the previous year. His goals for the raid were to move out before the inevitable Union offensive on Richmond and fight from a strong position of his choosing. He also was badly in need of supplies, and this offered him a chance to live off a new, unforaged part of the country. Although still technically the General in Chief, there was no discussion of the Western theater in his correspondence with Davis until April, and only then in answer to a report forwarded from Davis that Union General Burnside was moving west with 20,000 men. By this time, Johnston had been requesting reinforcements from Virginia for weeks, telling Davis his troops were spread too far apart to help each other. When notified of Burnside's movement from the East, Johnston asked Davis why they could not make a similar movement to counter it.<sup>47</sup> Lee disagreed that Johnston needed reinforcements from him, expressing this view to Davis in several messages. On the same day Johnston asked for troops to counter Burnside, Lee wrote Davis, telling him he believed Burnside was going to Kentucky, and that Johnston could get reinforcements from elsewhere in his own theater. Two weeks later, Lee told Davis he planned a "vigorous advance", and he believed "greater relief would in this way be afforded to the armies of middle Tennessee and on the Carolina coast than by any other method."<sup>48</sup>

Davis may have wanted to send some of Lee's troops west to Bragg, but never specifically mentioned it to Lee. Lee's messages over this



period indicate he recognized Davis's concern for the Western theater, but was not about to give up any of his own troops. Telling Davis his advance would relieve the other armies served to allay Davis's fears and allowed Lee to keep all his men. On 30 April 1863, Lee told Davis that Union forces were trying to turn him, but he felt safe as long as he had Longstreet's corps.<sup>49</sup> This message again seems designed to prevent Davis from taking any of his troops. Particularly interesting is the specific mention of Longstreet's corps, since this unit had already performed some independent operations and was eventually sent west after Gettysburg. This suggests Lee suspected Davis wanted to move troops from Virginia, and had a good idea who would be picked.

Davis agreed with Lee, and there was little correspondence between Richmond and Johnston after this exchange until Secretary of War Seddon ordered him to Mississippi to take personal command of the troops facing Grant. This episode again demonstrates the complete trust Davis had in Lee, because at the time he had no clear idea what Lee's own intentions were. He expressed this in a letter to Lee on 31 May, responding to a request from Lee for more men. In this correspondence, Lee told Davis he was sure that Virginia would be the theater of action, and that more men would allow him to move, better defending Richmond by spoiling the advance.<sup>50</sup> Lee finally told Davis what he needed to hear; telling him first that his movement would relieve the other armies, then that it would defend Richmond by spoiling the anticipated Union advance. In his response, Davis admitted to Lee that "I had never fully comprehended your views and purpose until the receipt of your letter yesterday." He went on to discuss the campaign in the West, admitting that it did not look good. He also told Lee "It is useless to look back, and it would be unkind to

annoy you in the midst of your many cares with the reflections which I have been unable to avoid."<sup>51</sup> Lee replied he was sorry to hear of Johnston's difficulties, and he still hoped he could beat Grant. Discussing a move by Grant to the Yazoo River, Lee said Grant might be retiring from the area. This seems to indicate Lee did not have full knowledge of the progress of the campaign in the West.<sup>52</sup>

The rest of Lee's campaign has been the subject of numerous studies, but for the purposes here does not require retelling. Lee headed north as far as Pennsylvania, but withdrew in July after taking heavy casualties at Gettysburg. Given the goals he and Davis stated, the campaign was not a failure; Richmond was not attacked and Lee had been able to supply his Army for several months on enemy territory. He was not, however, able to choose the site of the battle. Neither side had any plan to fight it out at Gettysburg, but concentrated on it to avoid being caught dispersed by the enemy.

The series of telegrams in April and May show the relationship between Davis and Lee, and point out a major flaw in Davis's performance as Commander in Chief. Davis should not have put Lee in a field command while retaining him as General in Chief, and this shows he may have realized his mistake. He had made decisions in the absence of Lee's advice, or based on decisions made by Lee with what appears to be sketchy knowledge at best of the other theaters. Davis was naturally focused on the theater closer to him, and putting Lee in field command in the same theater led to a myopic view of the rest of the Confederacy. Johnston was a capable commander, but had no chance competing for the same resources as Lee. Lee's main responsibility should have been as the honest broker between

theater commanders, but his position as field commander probably slanted his views.

After Gettysburg, Lee returned for a time to Richmond for discussions with Davis. Shortly after this, Davis decided to reinforce Bragg for an offensive against Rosecrans. Bragg declined the offer, saying the amount given were not enough to cross the mountains and attack Rosecrans.<sup>53</sup> Davis did not force him, saying,

However desirable a movement may be, it is never safe to do more than suggest it to a commanding general, and it would be unwise to order it's execution by one who foretold it's failure.<sup>54</sup>

On 6 August 1863, Davis enlarged Bragg's department, combining General Buckner's East Tennessee Department with Bragg. However, Davis did not dissolve the East Tennessee Department, and allowed Buckner to remain in an administrative role while still corresponding directly with Richmond.<sup>55</sup> This command relationship led to several problems in Bragg's department concerning who had authority to do anything.

By 21 August, Bragg was in trouble. Rosecrans was moving around his flank, and Burnside was advancing on Buckner in Knoxville. With Davis scrambling for reinforcements, even Lee agreed to remain on the defensive for the time being and detached General Longstreet and his corps to help Bragg. It took nearly one month to assemble all the forces and finally attack. After several miscues, Bragg attacked Rosecrans at Chickamauga Creek, and although he inflicted heavy casualties, the Union lines held until Rosecrans mistakenly ordered a division to move out of the line. Longstreet's men went through the gap, and Rosecrans retreated to Chattanooga, where Bragg began to lay siege to the city.

Shortly after the battle, Davis personally visited Bragg to investigate a series of letters written by Polk and Longstreet concerning Bragg's fitness as a commander. Just as after the Battle of Murfreesboro, Davis was faced with a loss of confidence in Bragg by his corps commanders. This time, he went in person to judge the situation. He apparently felt the same as he had the previous year; Bragg remained in command. Davis probably misjudged the effect of the constant arguing between Bragg and his commanders on the men of the Army. In November at Missionary Ridge, Grant attacked and routed Bragg, forcing him to retreat more than thirty miles.

Bragg offered his resignation after the disaster at Missionary Ridge; Davis accepted it and appointed him General in Chief. While it was commendable that Davis finally saw the need to have someone in Richmond filling that position, Bragg was not the ideal choice. His reputation was ruined by rumors over the past year and the defeat at Missionary Ridge. This was another example of the difference in the way Davis handled his generals. Those on good terms with him inevitably remained so, those who displeased him once could never recover.

#### 1864 And 1865: Resist Manfully

After the disasters during the last few months of 1863, there was no great campaign planned for the Spring of 1864. The Confederates seemed content to wait for the Union offensives. They did not have to wait long; Grant planned simultaneous advances on every front to prevent the Confederates from reinforcing each other. By May, both Lee and Johnston were heavily engaged and falling back. Lee and Davis corresponded very little during these campaigns, and when they did it was usually limited to situation updates. There is also very little correspondence with General

Bragg during this period, indicating that the General in Chief position did not have the same importance it did when Lee held the job in Richmond.

Davis again showed he was very comfortable with leaving Lee to his own devices, concentrating his efforts almost exclusively on General Johnston, who was facing General Sherman in Georgia. Still thinking Virginia was the main theater of action, Davis told Johnston to watch for signs that Sherman was detaching troops to reinforce Grant.<sup>56</sup> Johnston had little good news for Davis, falling back constantly through Georgia. Johnston knew Davis wanted an attack, and told him he knew he was disappointed, and that he was trying to "strike the enemy."<sup>57</sup>

By July, Davis was starting to show frustration with Johnston. Hearing of his latest withdrawal to the Chattahoochee River, Davis told Johnston he was "filled with apprehension." He told Johnston the tactical disadvantages of his position, fearing he would be trapped with the river to his back. He also feared that crossing the river would cut his communications to Alabama, and allow Union troops to march there. Davis told him a march by the enemy to Alabama would be practically unopposed, because they had stripped everywhere to reinforce him. He closed by saying they were dependent on his success.<sup>58</sup>

Johnston replied the following day, explaining why he had fallen back and assuring Davis that he was not in an exposed position. He told Davis that he believed Sherman's objective was Atlanta, and asked for four thousand Mississippi cavalry troops to break the rail lines between Sherman and Dalton, Georgia.<sup>59</sup> Davis replied angrily that if distant troops could break the rail lines, why not Johnston's own?<sup>60</sup> Five days later, Davis again wrote Johnston asking him to confirm that Sherman was extending his entrenchments near Atlanta. He also asked for Johnston's current situation

and plan of operations. Johnston replied the same day that he was facing double his own number and must remain in the defensive. He said his plan depended on the enemy, and he would watch for the chance to fight at an advantage. In order to free up his own army for this, he was fortifying Atlanta so it could be held "for a day or two" by Georgia militia.<sup>61</sup>

This was the last straw for Davis. He had said earlier that "only significant Southern military success could influence Northern sentiment."<sup>62</sup> There was a presidential election approaching, and it might be possible to remove Lincoln from office if the South could win some major battles. By this time, Davis believed the Confederacy really had no other hope of ending the war on favorable terms. He relieved Johnston the day after this exchange, for failure to stop the enemy and expressing "no confidence that you can defeat or repel him." Grant later wrote in his memoirs that he thought Johnston had exactly the correct strategy, and described the thorough defensive preparations Johnston had made during the winter. Each time Johnston's army fell back, they had prepared positions waiting. Grant said:

For my own part, I think Johnston's tactics were exactly right. Anything that could have prolonged the war a year beyond the time that it did finally close, would probably have exhausted the North to such an extent that they might then have abandoned the contest and agreed to a separation.<sup>63</sup>

Johnston was replaced by General Hood, who was given the advice "Be wary no less than bold," and told that he still might be able to cut Sherman's communications.<sup>64</sup> Hood was especially wary of taking command when Atlanta seemed ready to fall, and, citing the danger of changing command at the present time, asked if he could wait until the "fate of Atlanta is decided." Davis refused, and told Hood that Johnston was relieved for not

having a plan to defeat the enemy. He said he only asked for "what will promote the public good."<sup>65</sup>

Davis believed that Sherman could be forced to retreat by an attack on his lines of communications. This was specifically stated in Hood's appointing order, and Davis later told Hood not to attack Sherman in his entrenchments, he would be in worse condition if forced to retreat for supplies.<sup>66</sup> Although he very clearly told Hood what he wanted him to do, he never mentioned this strategy to Johnston. Perhaps he did not want to interfere with Johnston, but a more likely explanation is the poor relationship between the two which started at First Bull Run. Johnston was not faultless in this case, and had a bad habit of not revealing his plans, if indeed he had any. The fact remains that Davis knew what he wanted to do, but never even suggested it to Johnston in any correspondence. As Commander in Chief, he allowed the situation to deteriorate, then replaced his commander just as the enemy was bearing down on Atlanta and placed Hood in a no-win situation.

Six weeks after assuming command, Hood evacuated Atlanta. In a particularly dishonorable telegram to Davis, he blamed his men for the defeat, saying "We should have saved Atlanta had the officers and men of the Army done what was expected of them. It has been God's will for it to be otherwise."<sup>67</sup> Hood fell back, but quickly regrouped and finally gave Davis the attack he wanted by advancing on Sherman's communications. By this time, however, it was too late to influence the Presidential election in the North. On 8 September, Lincoln's opponent, former General in Chief George McClellan, announced in his acceptance speech that the war should be fought to reestablish the Union. Any hope Davis had of negotiating independence was now gone.

Davis refused to give up, and in October again placed his General in Chief in a field command. He ordered Bragg to command in Wilmington, once again emphasizing this was only temporary. With Lee under siege by Grant and Sherman preparing to move through Georgia, Davis told Bragg to leave the General in Chief office to some of his staff.<sup>68</sup> Once again, Davis was without a senior military advisor in Richmond. Two days later, he ordered Beauregard to take command of the Western theater, including Hood's Army. On 2 November, Davis again moved Bragg, this time to Augusta to oppose Sherman's advance.<sup>69</sup>

Beauregard and Davis started right where they had left off earlier. Beauregard's first telegram to Davis informed him that he had sent Hood on an offensive to Tennessee to relieve Lee.<sup>70</sup> This was the first knowledge Davis had of this advance, although Hood had been planning it before Beauregard arrived. Davis thought that Hood would continue the attack on Sherman's communications, the plan he endorsed all along. He replied six days later that he disagreed with this move, saying the enemy would regard the occupation of Tennessee or Kentucky "as of minor importance."<sup>71</sup> In his memoirs, Davis would later say that he did not order the recall of Hood because Hood had already advanced too far to be effectively recalled. This was the case because Davis was not in Richmond when Beauregard's telegram arrived, thus explaining the six days between receipt and reply.<sup>72</sup>

The fact that a major offensive started without the Commander in Chief's knowledge or consent, and that the telegram announcing this sat unattended for six days points out the complete breakdown of the high command in Richmond. This incident was the result of flaws previously pointed out, but all of them combined allowed this to happen. Things would



only get worse from here. Beauregard assured Davis that he could prevent Sherman from taking Augusta, Charleston, and Savannah; two weeks later he evacuated Savannah.<sup>73</sup> Davis tried to reinforce him with two divisions from Lee, but Lee replied that sending any troops would force him to abandon Richmond.<sup>74</sup> On 24 December, as Sherman presented Savannah to Lincoln as a Christmas present, Beauregard wired Davis that he had recalled Hood. He told Davis that he was now convinced that Sherman was not conducting a raid, but an "important campaign."<sup>75</sup>

The rest of the war was one disaster after another for the Confederacy. As the end neared, Davis once again turned to Lee. All through April 1865, Johnston, Beauregard, and Lee had been trying to coordinate their efforts either directly or through Davis. On 30 March 1865, nine days before Lee surrendered to Grant, Davis wired frantically for advice on the situation in North Carolina. He had reports that Johnston, who had replaced Bragg after he was again relieved, was removing supplies from Raleigh for safety. Fearing the loss of a large region of valuable supplies, Davis told Lee "I hope you will be able by specific instructions to avert so great a calamity."<sup>76</sup> With no clear picture of the situation, Lee could only answer that Beauregard was defending the rail line in the area. Later that day, Johnston forwarded a message from Lee to Beauregard that he was to assume command of all western Virginia and western North Carolina troops "that come within his reach."<sup>77</sup> Lee had no way of knowing who this would even be. By this time, everyone except Davis knew the war was over. Lee surrendered on 9 April 1865, and on 11 April Johnston asked for permission to call an armistice for discussions with Sherman. Davis polled his cabinet, and finding only one other person

agreed with him to continue fighting, reluctantly agreed. Still refusing to give up the fight, he fled south.

### Conclusions

Davis initially exhibited considerable skill as Commander in Chief of the Confederacy. Organizing a military in just a few short months, and then successfully using interior lines to defeat Union forces was a brilliant beginning. Bull Run was a major victory for the Confederacy, and a humiliating defeat for the Union.

The partnership between he and General Lee in 1862 was the high point of the Confederate war effort. When Lee was in Richmond acting as General in Chief, there was order in the Confederate high command. Lee was able to handle routine matters, allowing Davis time to perform the numerous other duties of President. The trust and faith Davis showed in Lee was not shown to anyone else in the Confederate military or government. Even initially after Lee was appointed to command the Army of Virginia, he and Davis were a capable team. The political campaigns into Maryland and Kentucky in the late summer of 1862 were strategically brilliant, and had a significant impact on the Northern election.

Unfortunately, Davis had several serious flaws that were evidenced early and continued throughout the war. Except for a few short months when Lee was in Richmond, there was no single point of contact in between the field commanders and the high command in Richmond. Davis did not appoint a General in Chief for over a year; this was by far his most serious mistake. Confusion was bound to arise when no one person in Richmond had the whole picture of the war. This was especially evident near the end of the war, when Beauregard's telegram telling Davis of Hood's Tennessee

campaign sat unanswered for six days because Davis was not in Richmond. After more than three years of war, this type of basic mistake was inexcusable.

When Davis finally did appoint a General in Chief, he sent him to a field command in addition to his overall duties. Although Davis stressed this was only temporary, Lee remained at the head of the Army of Virginia for the remainder of the war. Responsible as he was for his own Army, Lee could hardly be expected to remain impartial when considering the entire war effort. Lee was too far removed from Richmond and too occupied with the burdens of command to have a full understanding of the situation in the other theaters and showed this in several telegrams.

Finally, Davis held grudges, a luxury he could ill afford. Capable of displaying unswerving faith in men like A. S. Johnston and Lee, he would never trust Beauregard or J. E. Johnston after Bull Run. A comparison of his handling of Lee and J. E. Johnston clearly displays this. Lee had already started on his summer campaign in 1863 when Davis admitted that he did not have a complete understanding of his intentions. This stands in sharp contrast to his telegram to Johnston in Atlanta in 1864. Davis knew what he wanted Johnston to do, but never told him. When Johnston replied that his plan depended on the enemy, and that he was waiting for an advantage, Davis relieved him. Only after Hood took command did Davis propose what he really wanted. This attitude led to an inconsistent policy toward the different theaters, mainly dependent on who was commanding. If Davis' personality meshed with that of his general, as it did with Lee and A. S. Johnston, he generally allowed him to run his campaigns as he pleased. If the two did not get along, as with J. E. Johnston or Beauregard; Davis often interfered in operations or ignored their theaters. With no mechanism in place in Richmond to handle the daily

operations of the army, Davis tended to focus only on trouble areas. The end result was a policy of reaction rather than planning and execution.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

<sup>2</sup>JCS Pub 1: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Defense, 1987), 232.

<sup>3</sup>James R. Arnold, Presidents Under Fire: Commanders in Chief in Victory and Defeat (New York: Orion Books, 1994), 106.

<sup>4</sup>Archer Jones, Civil War Command Strategy: The Process of Victory and Defeat (New York: The Free Press, A Division of MacMillan, Inc., 1992), 16.

<sup>5</sup>James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 259.

<sup>6</sup>Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government (South Brunswick: Thomas Yoselhoff Ltd., 1958), I:233.

<sup>7</sup>Jefferson Davis to Joseph E. Davis, 18 June 1861, Lynda Laswell Crist, ed., Mary Seaton Dix, coed., The Papers of Jefferson Davis (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), vol. 7, 203.

<sup>8</sup>Arnold, Presidents Under Fire, 106.

<sup>9</sup>McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 337.

<sup>10</sup>McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 337. Dunbar Rowland, Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers, and Speeches (Jackson, MS, 1923), vol. V, 436; quoted in Thomas Lawrence Connelly and Archer Jones, The Politics of Command: Factions and Ideas in Confederate Strategy (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 89.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>12</sup>Beauregard to Davis, 9 July 1861, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1891; reprint, Harrisburg, PA: Historical Times, Inc., 1985), ser. 1, vol. II, 969.

<sup>13</sup>Davis to Johnston, 22 June 1861, Official Records, ser I, vol. 2, 945.

<sup>14</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, 1:346.

<sup>15</sup>Cooper to Beauregard, 17 July 1861, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 2, 980.

<sup>16</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, 1:345.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 347.

- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., 348.
- <sup>19</sup>Cooper to Johnston, 15 May 1861, Official Records, ser I, vol. 2, 844.
- <sup>20</sup>Davis to Cooper and Lee, 4 November 1861, Ibid., 511.
- <sup>21</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:69.
- <sup>22</sup>Davis to A.S. Johnston, 30 January 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 7, 850.
- <sup>23</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:94.
- <sup>24</sup>Benjamin to A.S. Johnston, 8 February 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 7, 862.
- <sup>25</sup>Davis to A.S. Johnston, 6 March 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 10, pt. II, 413.
- <sup>26</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:41-42.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., 47.
- <sup>28</sup>Davis to Brown, 11 April 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 10, pt. II, 413.
- <sup>29</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:69.
- <sup>30</sup>Johnson to Lee, 27 March 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 11, pt. III, 405.
- <sup>31</sup>Johnston to Lee, 30 April 1862, Ibid., 477.
- <sup>32</sup>Lee to Johnston, 1 May 1862, Ibid., 485.
- <sup>33</sup>Johnston to Lee, 10 May 1862, Ibid., 506.
- <sup>34</sup>Davis to Johnston, 11 May 1862 and 25 May 1862, Ibid., 507, 546.
- <sup>35</sup>Davis to Johnston, 17 May 1862, Ibid., 524.
- <sup>36</sup>Davis to Johnston, 23 May 1862, Ibid., 536.
- <sup>37</sup>Connely and Jones, The Politics of Command, 36.
- <sup>38</sup>Jones, Civil War Command and Strategy, 68.
- <sup>39</sup>Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:132.
- <sup>40</sup>Lee to Davis, 23 August 1862, Lee to Davis, 24 August 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 12, pt. III, 941-2.

<sup>41</sup>Davis to Lee, 26 August 1862, Ibid., 945.

<sup>42</sup>Lee to Davis, 3 September 1862, Lee to Davis, 5 September 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 19, pt. II, 590-93.

<sup>43</sup>Lee to Davis, 7 September 1862, Ibid., 596.

<sup>44</sup>Davis to Lee, 7 September 1862, Ibid., 598.

<sup>45</sup>Lee to Davis, 8 September 1862, Ibid., 600.

<sup>46</sup>Davis to Johnston, 198 February 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 23, pt. II, 640.

<sup>47</sup>Johnston to Davis, 2 April 1863, Ibid., 826.

<sup>48</sup>Lee to Davis, 2 April 1863, Lee to Davis, 16 April 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 25, pt. II, 700, 725.

<sup>49</sup>Lee to Davis, 30 April 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 25, pt. II, 761.

<sup>50</sup>Lee to Davis, 30 May 1863, Ibid., 832.

<sup>51</sup>Davis to Lee, 31 May 1863, Ibid., 841.

<sup>52</sup>Lee to Davis, 2 June 1863, Ibid., 848.

<sup>53</sup>Connely and Jones, Politics of Command, 133.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>56</sup>Davis to Johnston, 13 May 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 38, pt. IV, 705.

<sup>57</sup>Johnston to Davis, 21 May 1864, Ibid., 736.

<sup>58</sup>Davis to Johnston, 7 July 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 38, pt. V, 867.

<sup>59</sup>Johnston to Davis, 8 July 1864, Ibid., 848-9.

<sup>60</sup>Davis to Johnston, 11 July 1864, Ibid., 875-6.

<sup>61</sup>Davis to Johnston, 16 July 1864, Johnston to Davis, 16 July 1864, Ibid., 882-3.

<sup>62</sup>Beringer, Hattaway, Jones, and Still, Why the South Lost the Civil War, 323.

<sup>63</sup>U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1990), 505.

<sup>64</sup>Seddon to Johnston, 17 July 1864, Seddon to Hood, 17 July 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 28, pt. V, 885.

<sup>65</sup>Hood to Cooper, 18 July 1864, Davis to Hood, 18 July 1864, *Ibid.*, 888.

<sup>66</sup>Davis to Hood, 5 August 1864, *Ibid.*, 946.

<sup>67</sup>Hood to Davis, 6 September 1864, *Ibid.*, 1023.

<sup>68</sup>Davis to Bragg, 15 October 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 42, pt. II, 1149.

<sup>69</sup>Davis to Bragg, 2 November 1864, *Ibid.*, 1225.

<sup>70</sup>Beauregard to Davis, 24 November 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 44, 890.

<sup>71</sup>Davis to Beauregard, 30 November 1864, *Ibid.*, 910.

<sup>72</sup>Davis, Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, II:569.

<sup>73</sup>Beauregard to Davis, 6 December 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 44, 931.

<sup>74</sup>Davis to Lee, 19 December 1864, Lee to Davis, 19 December 1864, *Ibid.*, 966.

<sup>75</sup>Beauregard to Davis, 24 December 1864, *Ibid.*, 984.

<sup>76</sup>Davis to Lee, 30 March 1865, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 47, pt. III, 712.

<sup>77</sup>Lee to Davis, 1 April 1865, Johnston to Beauregard, 1 April 1865, *Ibid.*, 717, 737.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### LINCOLN: MILITARY STRATEGY AND COMMAND STRUCTURE

Abraham Lincoln began his tenure as Commander in Chief with several advantages that Jefferson Davis did not have. He inherited a functioning government and a standing military. This was a huge advantage for him, and allowed him to concentrate his efforts on his strategy to restore the Union.

Lincoln initially changed nothing in the executive branch or high command of the military. He appointed Gideon Welles as Secretary of the Navy, and Simon Cameron as Secretary of War. In a remarkable parallel to Davis, Welles would serve him well the entire war, while Cameron proved to be a disappointment and was relieved within a year. Lincoln had better luck with the Secretary of War position than Davis however, and appointed Edwin Stanton as Cameron's relief. Stanton proved to be extremely capable and aggressive, and served well for the remainder of the war. Lincoln also appointed generals to various administrative departments, such as Quartermaster General and Surgeon General. As in the Confederacy, these men served in primarily administrative roles, and except for a short period in 1862, provided limited strategic advice.

Lincoln's main initial advantage was his General in Chief, Winfield Scott. Scott had served over fifty years in the military, and although he was physically incapable of field command, he was still able to provide Lincoln good strategic advice. He provided Lincoln the best advice

and most accurate assessments he would receive during his first months in office.

Lincoln's goal throughout the war was to restore the Union. Lincoln and Scott mistakenly believed there was considerable pro-Union sentiment in the South, and this would quickly prevail if they could contain the rebellion quickly. There were initially two strategies proposed to accomplish this. Scott provided the first, his famous "Anaconda Plan." He proposed a blockade of Confederate seaports, combined with a naval force on the Mississippi supported by 80,000 infantry in unequal columns. These would move abreast as practicable for mutual support, taking Confederate river fortifications as they went. This plan would seal the Confederacy from any outside trade, eventually strangling it. The problem with this plan was the amount of time required to execute it and allow it to take effect. Scott's estimate was four and a half months to train the men, then wait for the rivers to rise and first frost to kill off the "malignant forces below Memphis." Scott himself realized this plan would require a long time to work, and that people in the North would be too impatient.<sup>1</sup>

Lincoln received similar, although considerably less realistic advice from his Secretary of War. At a Cabinet meeting the day Fort Sumter was attacked, Lincoln asked Cameron what he proposed to do. Cameron suggested Lincoln call up 500,000 militia and build a line of forts from Charleston to the Mississippi to "hermetically seal the South."<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, Lincoln disregarded that piece of advice.

Scott also discussed the possibility of invasion, but advised against it. He estimated an invasion would require 300,000 men and take two to three years to accomplish. While this turned out to be optimistic,

it was amazingly accurate considering he proposed it in early 1861. No one else in Washington expected anything close to what Scott predicted, and the fact that he came as close as he did indicates the quality of strategic advice he was giving Lincoln.<sup>3</sup> Lincoln settled on his own strategy, combining Scott's suggestion to blockade the seaports with an advance toward Richmond. He called up 75,000 militia for ninety days on 15 April 1861, and proclaimed a blockade on 19 April.

#### First Bull Run

There is very little discussion of Lincoln's plans for the first Battle of Bull Run in his papers prior to the battle, and no correspondence between him and his field commanders in the Official Records until after the battle. However, Lincoln was the one of the few people in the Union high command discussing an advance in June 1861, and on 29 June, he held a cabinet meeting to discuss military options. Scott tried one last time to push his Anaconda Plan, but Lincoln wanted an immediate advance. General McDowell, commander of the Army of the Potomac, presented a plan to move on Manassas, Virginia and turn the Confederates out of their prepared defenses. McDowell himself was not confident of the plan, citing the short amount of time he had for training his troops. Lincoln assured him that the Confederates were no better trained and approved the plan.<sup>4</sup>

Lincoln had good reason to chance an offensive besides the public outcry to press "On to Richmond." The term of the ninety-day militia he had called up was about to expire, and if the Union was to accomplish anything with them, it would have to be quickly.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Confederate Congress was scheduled to meet on 20 July in Richmond, and preventing them from convening would be a major blow to the Confederacy as

well as politically popular in the North.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Lincoln mistakenly believed a quick Union victory and occupation of Richmond would quickly end the war.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever Lincoln hoped to achieve, the First Battle of Bull Run turned to be a complete disaster for the Union. General Beauregard knew exactly when McDowell moved out of Washington, and General Johnston was able to withdraw in front of Union troops under General Patterson to join Beauregard and defeat McDowell. The battle was an incalculable boost to Confederate morale, and a wake up call to the Union that this was not going to be an easy, quick war.

From documentation in the Official Records and Lincoln's papers, he evidently adopted a "hands off" approach to the operation once ordering it in June. There is no record of communication between him and McDowell or Scott concerning the battle. This was also the case with the War department; no correspondence is recorded between the War department and McDowell or Scott. All communications from McDowell to Washington went through Army Headquarters, and most of that through Lieutenant Colonel E. D. Townsend, the Assistant Adjutant General rather than General Scott. This suggests the initial confidence Lincoln had in the military high command and points out the confidence the Union commanders had in the ultimate success of the operation. Never again would Lincoln be so uninvolved in the execution of a campaign.

#### Reorganization And The Tennessee River Campaign

Two days after the defeat at Bull Run, Lincoln drafted a "Memorandum of Military Policy Suggested by the Bull Run Defeat." In it, he recommended the military take eleven steps. The first step was to "Let

the plan for making the blockade effective be pushed forward with all possible dispatch." After this, he recommended more drilling for the forces at Fort Monroe, then said: "Let Baltimore be held as now, with a gentle but firm and certain hand." He continued, consolidating command in Western Virginia under General McClellan and discharging the militia who declined to reenlist as well reorganizing those remaining. He also emphasized his concern for the Western theater, telling General Fremont to "push forward his organization and operations in the West as rapidly as possible, giving rather special attention to Missouri." Four days later, he added the taking of Manassas and Strasburg and the railroads near them, and a joint movement on Memphis and East Tennessee by Union forces in the West.<sup>8</sup> Lincoln realized early on he was going to need a major change in the military, and he wrote down the direction he wanted that change to take.

Within days of the defeat at Bull Run, Lincoln called General McClellan to Washington to command the Army of the Potomac. McClellan and Scott did not get along at all, and in October, Scott asked to be retired. Lincoln allowed Scott to leave, and appointed McClellan General in Chief, as well as Commander of the Army of the Potomac, on 1 November 1861. If Lincoln was looking for a man of action, he was disappointed in McClellan. McClellan began habits here that he continued throughout his service. Throughout the good weather of that fall, McClellan remained inactive. He drilled his troops and organized the Army well, but hesitated to take them into battle.

Lincoln remained patient for a while, perhaps remembering that he had ordered McDowell into action when he was not yet ready. By December 1861, however, Lincoln's patience was wearing thin. McClellan grew ill

late in the month, and Lincoln began corresponding directly to his generals in the west. During January 1862, Lincoln sent numerous telegrams to both Generals Halleck and Buell, asking about their operations and making recommendations. On 31 December, he recommended to Halleck that he move on Columbus when Buell advanced on Bowling Green. At the end of this telegram he asked Halleck if he and Buell were "in concert." The following day, he told Buell that he had "better get in concert with General Halleck at once."<sup>9</sup>

Things were evidently very confused in Washington. Judging from the correspondence, Lincoln believed an offensive in the West was imminent. This was news to his generals, however. A series of telegrams between Lincoln, McClellan, Halleck, and Buell from 4 - 6 January shows clearly the poor coordination in the Union high command. It began with Lincoln wiring Buell, asking "Have arms gone forward for East Tennessee?"; to which Buell replied they had not. McClellan, well enough to resume his duties, contacted Buell next to tell him that he could not move in the East until East Tennessee was occupied. Halleck finished this round of messages by telling Lincoln and McClellan that he was not ready for any advance, did not know Buell's plan, and reminding them that two columns operating on exterior lines fails ninety-nine out of one hundred times.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln tried to get his generals to commit to a date when they would be ready to move, but none would. In an endorsement to Halleck's reply, Lincoln said "It is exceedingly discouraging. As everywhere else, nothing can be done."<sup>11</sup>

By the end of the month, Lincoln had had enough. On 27 January, he published General War Order Number One:

Ordered that the 22nd day of February 1862, be the day for a general movement of the Land and Naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces. That especially - The Army at and about Fortress

Monroe, The Army of the Potomac, The Army of Western Virginia . . . and a Naval force in the Gulf of Mexico, be ready for a movement on that day.<sup>12</sup>

He gave no objective or plan, just called for a general movement. Four days later, he issued Special War Order Number One to the Army of the Potomac, specifically tasking McClellan:

Ordered that all the disposable force of the Army of the Potomac, after providing safely for the defense of Washington, be formed into an expedition, for the immediate object of seizing and occupying a point on the Rail Road South Westward of what is known of Manassas Junction.<sup>13</sup>

This was also to occur on or before 22 February. Not a master plan of simultaneous movements, this was an expression of Lincoln's frustration with his generals and their excuses for not moving. Two years later, in his first meeting with General Grant, Lincoln said he never wanted to interfere in campaign plans, but procrastination by his commanders and pressure from the people and the Congress caused him to issue these and several other war orders later in the war. Lincoln admitted to Grant, "He did not know but they were all wrong, and did know that some of them were."<sup>14</sup>

Lincoln finally got his advance from General Grant, who moved in early February and seized Forts Henry and Donelson. Lincoln received word of the fall of Fort Donelson on 16 February, and wired Halleck the same day. Showing a grasp of operations not evidenced in his General Orders, Lincoln expressed his gratitude, but also warned Halleck to be vigilant. He told him that Fort Donelson was safe, "unless Grant should be overwhelmed from the outside." He told Halleck that he and Buell must act in "full co-operation to prevent this." He then urged Halleck to send some cavalry to cut off railroads and use gunboats to destroy bridges the Confederates could use to concentrate on Grant.<sup>15</sup>

Written almost two months before Shiloh, this was an amazingly accurate forecast of the exact strategy used by the Confederates to attack Grant. Lincoln was becoming more confident advising his generals, and would retain almost exclusive control over all military operations for the next several months. This was also where Lincoln began to notice Grant and Halleck, two generals who would rise to prominence during the war. At a time when his patience had worn thin, they gave him a victory.

### The Peninsula Campaign

Things were looking good in the West, but Lincoln was having problems with his General in Chief in the East. Lincoln and McClellan disagreed on the campaign plan for McClellan's spring campaign. McClellan proposed his plan to conduct a seaborne movement to the Chesapeake Bay; Lincoln preferred a direct march to Richmond. Lincoln wrote McClellan on 3 February 1862, asking a series of questions concerning the relative advantages of the two plans. McClellan had anticipated most of these, and had written Secretary of War Stanton earlier, on 31 January, to explain the advantages of his plan.<sup>16</sup>

On 11 March 1862, tired of numerous delays and concerned that McClellan would not be able to function as General in Chief while in the field, Lincoln relieved him as General in Chief. In doing so, he and Secretary of War Stanton assumed direct command of the military. In the telegram relieving McClellan as General in Chief, Lincoln ordered a restructuring of the departments in the West. He split the theater into two departments, and placed Halleck and General Fremont in command of them. He also informed the Generals to make all reports directly to the Secretary of War.<sup>17</sup>



Lincoln and Stanton tried a new command system for the next three months. Calling retired General Hitchcock back to active duty, they appointed him as personal advisor to Stanton, and also placed him at the head of a "War Board." Hitchcock was an 1817 graduate of West Point, and had served under Scott in the Mexican War, where he was brevetted a colonel and brigadier general. The other members of the War Board were Stanton and the Staff Generals such as the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, etc. The War Board was an idea of Stanton's, originally meant to provide him with military advice. With no General in Chief, the War Board also assumed the duties of that position.<sup>18</sup> The War Board was the closest thing either side had to a modern staff, and although it served Stanton's purpose well for the war, it was a poor substitute for a General in Chief. To his credit, Lincoln would recognize this after three months.

Lincoln's main concerns were the defense of Washington and safety of the Army. He formally agreed to McClellan's Peninsula campaign plan in a telegram on 13 March 1862, but added three conditions: enough troops must be left at Manassas to prevent the enemy from recapturing it, Washington must be left secure, and the rest of the force must be moved at once "in pursuit of the enemy by some route."<sup>19</sup>

Lincoln's concern for the safety of Washington was the cause of the first serious disagreement between he and McClellan. McClellan left Washington for the Peninsula without fully discussing the number of troops remaining and their disposition with Lincoln. Lincoln felt his order had not been complied with, so ordered Stanton to retain one of the two corps waiting to join McClellan.<sup>20</sup> McDowell's corps was ordered to remain in Washington, much to McClellan's dismay. He began asking for reinforcements immediately, citing a strong enemy in front of him.<sup>21</sup>

This was the first of many messages McClellan would send to Lincoln, asking for troops because of superior numbers in front of him. Lincoln answered this first round on 9 April, asking McClellan if he really thought that he (Lincoln) should allow the line between Richmond and Washington to be left entirely open. He then pointed out a discrepancy of 23,000 troops in McClellan's own figures, asking why he had so many less than he reported just three days earlier. Finally, he told him that his delays would only allow the enemy to fortify and make his advance that much more difficult. He closed by telling McClellan that he would sustain and support him, but he must "strike a blow."<sup>22</sup>

Most Generals would have accepted this mild rebuke and acted on it, but not McClellan. Lincoln was still waiting on 1 May, when McClellan sent a request for parrot guns. Lincoln replied that the request indicated "indefinite procrastination", and closed by asking "Is anything to be done?"<sup>23</sup> McClellan began moving toward Richmond on 5 May.

There was considerable correspondence between Lincoln and McClellan over the next two months as McClellan moved to the outskirts of Richmond and besieged the city. A large portion dealt with McClellan's continual requests for more troops, and Lincoln's refusal to remove troops from the line between Washington and Richmond. Of particular interest for comparison to Davis is Lincoln's telegram of 9 May, telling McClellan he must stop writing angry letters to Congressmen. McClellan was having trouble with three of his generals, and was writing letters to their political backers in Congress. Lincoln told McClellan that Senators and Representatives spoke of him (Lincoln) in their places as they pleased and that "officers of the Army must cease addressing insulting letters to them for taking no greater liberty with them."<sup>24</sup> Lincoln's attitude toward

attacks on him in the Congress contrasted sharply with Davis's petty quarreling with his generals over charges made in the Confederate Congress after First Bull Run.

Beginning 29 May, Lincoln expressed concern over Stonewall Jackson's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley. Part of a Confederate plan to keep reinforcements from McClellan, it worked brilliantly. Lincoln kept McClellan updated on intelligence he received, all the while urging him to attack. On 18 June, he told McClellan he had a report corroborating a rumor that Jackson had been reinforced from Richmond. He told McClellan he believed this was as good as an equal number of reinforcements to him, and told him he could "better dispose of things if I could know about what day you can attack Richmond, and would be glad to be informed."<sup>25</sup> The following day Lincoln wired that he was no longer certain about the reinforcements, and asked McClellan if he thought it might be a deception. He followed the next day by telling McClellan that he could not send any more troops until he was certain about the number of Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley.<sup>26</sup>

All during the time of these telegrams to McClellan, Lincoln was corresponding almost daily with Generals McDowell and Fremont, who were defending Washington. Using the War Board to advise him, Lincoln was attempting to stop the Confederates moving north through the Shenandoah. He was directing the movements of the two generals, attempting to trap Jackson before he could withdraw. On 30 May, he thought he had been successful. With both Fremont and McDowell converging on Strasburg, Virginia, he telegraphed them both: "It seems you have the game before you."<sup>27</sup> Jackson was there, but not long enough for Fremont and McDowell to press the attack. In rainy weather, Jackson slipped away southward to

reinforce Lee at Richmond. Lincoln continued to order his generals after Jackson until finally, on 9 June, he ordered Fremont to halt at Harrisonburg and guard against a movement of the enemy back towards Strasburg.<sup>28</sup>

If Lincoln was disappointed at missing Jackson, it was minor compared to the disaster that was about to occur on the Peninsula. Lee attacked McClellan on 25 June, unsuccessfully at first, but then receiving reinforcements when Jackson arrived a day late from the Shenandoah Valley. McClellan began wiring Lincoln of a great victory against great odds on 25 June, repeating this several times and all the while asking for more men. He changed his tone considerably by 28 June, however, when he wrote to Stanton that the government had failed to sustain his Army, and if he saved it he owed no one in Washington any thanks. The last line was deleted by telegraph operators in Washington who refused to show Stanton such an insubordinate communication.<sup>29</sup>

Lincoln answered him immediately, saying that he must save his Army. He went on to explain that the enemy concentrated on him because Washington was protected. If they had not left troops in the Capitol, the attack would have come there instead of at Richmond. Lincoln said it was "the nature of the case" and no one was to blame.<sup>30</sup> Even without the last line, the telegraph from McClellan was insubordinate and inexcusable. The patience Lincoln showed in his reply was another example of the contrast between he and Davis in handling their generals.

McClellan had regained some of his composure by 2 July, and again started asking for reinforcements. In response to a request for 50,000 men, Lincoln replied that McClellan's own plan for the defense of Washington called for 75,000 and Lincoln did not even have that. He told

McClellan that he did not blame him for not doing more, McClellan should not ask him for "impossibilities."<sup>31</sup> McClellan persisted, and Lincoln tried to find replacements for him, even asking Halleck for 10,000 infantry.<sup>32</sup> By 13 July, Lincoln had tired of McClellan's constant badgering and questionable muster records. Comparing McClellan's reported numbers with his own records, Lincoln pointed out that McClellan had at least 45,000 troops unaccounted for. Lincoln asked "How can they be got to you, and how can we keep such large numbers from getting away again?"<sup>33</sup>

Lincoln's patience was at an end. He consulted retired General Scott at West Point for recommendations for a new General in Chief. On 11 July, tired of complaints from McClellan and weary of the extra duties of directing the movement of armies in the field, he ordered General Halleck to Washington to report for duty as the new General in Chief of the Union Army. He had experimented with the War Board for four months, and realized he needed a General in Washington.

The Peninsula Campaign was the height of Lincoln's direct control of military operations. The disaster of First Bull Run caused him to reconsider his "hands off" approach, and during this campaign he directed nearly all movements. He found, as did Jefferson Davis, that the workload was too much in addition to attending to the normal duties of the President. With Halleck in Washington as General in Chief, he would begin to regain some of the confidence in his General in Chief he had earlier. Although he would still occasionally communicate directly with his field commanders, Lincoln began to release some of his direct control of military operations.

### Second Bull Run And Antietam

Halleck's first assignment from Lincoln was to visit McClellan on the Peninsula. He went with Quartermaster General Meigs to get a firsthand look at the situation and condition of the Army and McClellan. He recommended to Lincoln that McClellan's Army be recalled. Lincoln agreed, and McClellan was ordered back to Washington.

Between Halleck's arrival in July and mid September, Lincoln once again discontinued direct correspondence with his field commanders. There is considerable correspondence between Halleck, McClellan, and Pope during this period. Lincoln appeared to be trying to remove himself from the high degree of involvement he had exercised earlier. He began more frequent communication, mainly to McClellan, after Pope's defeat at Second Bull Run.

As discussed earlier, Lee began his advance into Maryland in August 1862. McClellan was still on the Peninsula, withdrawing his troops as slowly as he did most everything else. Facing Lee was General Pope, who was in command of all forces in northern Virginia. Pope had moved south, not expecting to meet a force as large as the Confederates had. Halleck was extremely concerned; the two Union armies were separated with an enemy force between them. He cautioned Pope against exposing himself to disaster and warned him that Lee might try to turn his right flank<sup>34</sup>. This was exactly what happened however, and Pope was soundly defeated by Lee on 29-30 August at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Halleck wired McClellan on 31 August, asking him to come to Washington to help him, declaring he was "utterly tired out."<sup>35</sup>

Lincoln's concern was growing also. He had not been in direct contact with his field commanders concerning operations until 21 August. After this date, he began telegraphing both Generals Burnside and McClellan

for information from the front. While his confidence in Halleck was not strong enough that he would remain completely out of military operations, he twice referred McClellan to Halleck when he wrote with suggestions. On 29 August, Lincoln told McClellan that he agreed with a suggestion to concentrate forces to restore Pope's communications, but he left those decisions to General Halleck. One week later, he again responded to recommendations from McClellan by repeating that "General Halleck must control these questions."<sup>36</sup>

Lincoln was clearly trying to force all correspondence from the field through Halleck; but at the same time was demonstrating a lack of confidence in him by directly contacting those same field commanders. This was a problem that would remain throughout the campaign. Lincoln was also clearly concerned for the safety of Washington. On 3 September, four days after Pope's defeat, he ordered Halleck to immediately organize an Army for field operations, but again stressed this was to be independent of forces required for the defense of Washington.

Fearing for the safety of Washington, Lincoln placed McClellan in command of the troops in and around Washington within days of Pope's defeat. The troops around the Capitol were demoralized and badly in need of organization and discipline. Although McClellan was a poor field commander, there were few generals who could match his skill at organizing an army and preparing it to fight. Lincoln knew this, and placed him in command of the defenses of Washington. He never intended to leave him there, he merely needed someone to restore organization to the forces around Washington. Although McClellan had been stubborn and insubordinate, Lincoln selected him because he was the best man for that job.

Halleck was receiving severe criticism from Lincoln's Cabinet for calling on McClellan for help, but Lincoln publicly stood by him.<sup>37</sup>

Lincoln was, however, severely disappointed with Halleck, saying:

after Pope's defeat, when he broke down - all nerve and pluck gone - and has ever since evaded all possible responsibility - little more than a first rate clerk.<sup>38</sup>

Lincoln began more frequent visits to the telegraph office; sending one line telegrams to McClellan, "How does it look now?"<sup>39</sup> By 12 September, Lincoln seemed more confident of the safety of Washington. In a telegram to McClellan, he asked for confirmation that Lee was recrossing the Potomac. He closed telling McClellan not to let Lee "get off without being hurt."<sup>40</sup> This was the first time Lincoln mentioned Lee's Army as an objective. Up to this time, he appears to have been primarily concerned with protecting Washington. This last telegram shows either a renewed confidence in the defenses around Washington, or recognition that Washington was not Lee's objective.

McClellan obliged Lincoln this time, aided considerably by a set of Lee's orders which were discovered by some of McClellan's men. McClellan attacked Lee, and the morning of 15 September, prematurely reported to Halleck that the enemy was panicked and whipped. Lincoln read these dispatches and urged McClellan: "Destroy the rebel army, if possible."<sup>41</sup>

McClellan was unable to destroy Lee's Army, and after the Battle of Antietam, failed to pursue him across the Potomac. Lincoln urged him to pursue Lee all through the fall, writing some of the most caustic telegrams he would address to anyone in the war. In one of these, he discussed possible operations with McClellan, pointing out the many advantages he had over Lee. After proposing several options, he reminded him that Lee's



troops had already done everything McClellan said was too difficult.<sup>42</sup> McClellan performed at his usual pace, and Lee remained safe south of the Potomac River. Lincoln showed his frustration on 24 October, responding to a request from McClellan to Halleck for horses to replace those of his because they were fatigued. Lincoln asked him, "Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?"<sup>43</sup> On 7 November, days after the mid term elections, Lincoln replaced McClellan with General Burnside.

Burnside was not a good choice for command of an army, but Lincoln had reason to believe he would be successful. T. Harry Williams said Lincoln tended to choose generals who had successful in independent command when looking for a new commanding general for the Army of the Potomac.<sup>44</sup> Earlier that year, Burnside had conducted a highly successful water-borne operation in North Carolina. Pope had also experienced success in the West with a small independent command. After Burnside, Lincoln broke from this pattern, and elevated corps commanders to head the Army of the Potomac.

The Battle of Antietam on 17 September was actually more a draw than a Union victory, but Lincoln's focus was clearly shifting. He urged McClellan to destroy Lee's army, the first time in the war he had specifically discussed an army as an objective. He would continue to urge his commanders to destroy Lee's army for the rest of the war, changing the focus of the campaigns from attacking or defending capitals to the more Napoleonic strategy of destruction of the enemy's main army. Lincoln realized earlier than his generals that Lee and his army were the true center of gravity of the Confederacy, not Richmond.

He was also using the political tools available to him, releasing the "Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation" shortly after the Battle of

Antietam. This was distributed along with a circular from the Secretary of State to Diplomats and Consul Officers.<sup>45</sup> In his annual message to Congress on 1 December 1862, Lincoln stated that earlier in the year (June), there had been a strong possibility that the "maritime powers" would reverse their recognition of the Confederacy as a belligerent rather than insurgents. He told Congress this had been delayed by "temporary reverses which afterwards befell the national arms."<sup>46</sup> The timing of the release and distribution leaves little doubt the main intention of the document was to discourage formal recognition of the Confederacy by France and England by formally declaring the war was being fought against slavery.

#### Vicksburg And Gettysburg

The Vicksburg campaign got off to a poor start, and Lincoln was responsible for considerable confusion in the planning stages. Approached directly by General McClernand, an Illinois Democrat, Lincoln approved his plan in October 1862 for the assault of Vicksburg over the late objections of Halleck. Again, Lincoln was allowing Halleck to be bypassed. Halleck did convince Lincoln to allow him to remain in charge of all troops raised by McClernand for this venture. As troops became available, Halleck sent them to Grant, who had full control of all troops in the West and who shared Halleck's distrust of McClernand.

Grant and Sherman hurried preparations and moved out on 20 December 1862, four days early and with McClernand's troops. McClernand arrived in Memphis to find that his Army had left without him. McClernand protested strongly to Lincoln, who sided with Halleck and Grant. In any event, the expedition never really developed due to Confederate raids on Grant's stores and communications.<sup>47</sup>

Lincoln's approval of McClernand's plan seemed to be a mistake, and showed his tendency to allow Halleck to be bypassed or to bypass him himself. He would not do this with every General, and would in fact point out the proper chain of command to some as demonstrated above with McClellan. This seems to point to ulterior motives, especially in this case. Lincoln may have approved this plan with an eye towards more Democratic support in the upcoming midterm elections.<sup>48</sup> By approving the plan in October, then siding with Halleck and Grant after the elections, Lincoln showed that he had no strong commitment to McClernand or his plan. McClernand went along as a subordinate to Grant, and served the entire campaign until the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863.

Although Lincoln was very interested in seeing Vicksburg fall and the Mississippi opened, he used little direct influence in the campaign other than that discussed above. Correspondence between Washington and the West went exclusively through Halleck. This was probably because of Lincoln's opinion of General Grant, who was winning victories and not constantly asking for reinforcements or supplies. Lincoln stood by him after his near defeat at Shiloh, and seemed satisfied with his generalship.

The Army of the Potomac was another matter entirely. Lincoln replaced McClellan with General Burnside, who commanded just long enough to have his Army crushed at Fredericksburg. He was replaced in January by General Hooker, a Commander in Burnside's Army with a reputation as a fighter. Lincoln did not fully trust Hooker; he had made allegations against Burnside while a corps commander and made comments about the need for a dictator for the government and the Army. Lincoln believed him to be a skilled general, however, and put him at the head of the Army of the Potomac. On doing so, he wrote him a personal letter, telling him bluntly

that he was not satisfied with him on several counts. He told him he thought he had:

taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him [Burnside] as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer.

Referring to Hooker's remarks about the need for a dictator, he said: "Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship." After assuring Hooker he would support him completely, Lincoln closed, saying "Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories."<sup>49</sup>

Hooker started badly, attacking Lee in April at Chancellorsville, but falling back across the Rappahannock River with heavy casualties. Lincoln allowed him more time, unlike Burnside who never wanted the command anyway. Hooker corresponded directly with Lincoln as often as he did with Halleck. Although Lincoln habitually referred Hooker's questions concerning troop movements or operations to Halleck, this was an awkward arrangement. Lincoln passed along occasional advice, telling Hooker once not to let Lee catch him during a crossing of the Rappahannock. Lincoln warned him not to get stuck "like an ox jumped half over a fence."<sup>50</sup> He also corrected Hooker when he proposed a march on Richmond, telling him; "Lee's army, not Richmond is your sure objective point."<sup>51</sup> Lincoln no longer discussed Richmond as a goal.

Much to his surprise, Lincoln found himself again prodding the Commander of the Army of the Potomac to fight. After Chancellorsville, Hooker never lived up to the nickname of "Fightin' Joe." Lincoln tried to press him. In June, with Lee's army back on the move, Lincoln described the situation to Hooker as they saw it in Washington. With the cities of

Martinsburg and Winchester in Western Virginia surrounded, Lincoln explained that Lee's army must be stretched thin, and asked why Hooker could not break him. Hooker replied that he did not have Halleck's confidence, and if the situation was allowed to continue "we may look in vain for success." Lincoln told Hooker that he apparently was under a mistaken impression about his chain of command, and put Hooker in "the strict military relation" of a General to the General in Chief. He closed reminding Hooker that General Halleck gave the orders, and Hooker obeyed them.<sup>52</sup>

This finally fixed Lincoln's problem of multiple lines of correspondence from the field to Washington. He allowed it to go on longer than it should have, but from this point, the bypassing of General Halleck stopped. There was no more direct correspondence between Lincoln and Hooker until he asked to be relieved on 27 June. Lincoln obliged him, and appointed General Meade to command the Army of the Potomac. Meade would remain in command until the end of the war.

Meade received orders and directed all his requests and plans to Halleck. Meade believed he could best strike Lee and defend Washington by choosing a strong position and receiving Lee's attack. He chose a town called Pipe Creek just south of the Pennsylvania-Maryland border to make his stand.<sup>53</sup> As he began to move, Lee grew alarmed and began concentrating his scattered troops. Some of Lee's men came through the town of Gettysburg, and told Lee it was the hub of the good local roads. Lee began to concentrate his troops on Gettysburg, where they found Union cavalry under General Buford. Buford advised Meade that the Confederates were massing on Gettysburg, and that it was a better place to defend than Pipe

Creek. Meade agreed, and on 1 July, only four days after taking command of the Army of the Potomac, Meade fought the greatest battle of the Civil War.

After the battle, Meade sent a telegram to Halleck, saying he would pursue Lee along the flanks if Lee retreated.<sup>54</sup> Lincoln was receiving no reports from Meade, but was again spending time in the telegraph office reading messages. He wrote to Halleck on 6 July that he was unhappy that Lee was being allowed to get away.<sup>55</sup> This set off a flurry of telegrams to Meade from Halleck, all urging him to attack Lee before he crossed the Potomac. Halleck sent three on 7 July, and two more on 8 July, the last telling Meade that "the President is urgent and anxious."<sup>56</sup>

Meade was in no hurry to comply and did not answer Halleck until 12 July, when he said he planned to attack the following day. When he did not, he told Halleck the reason was five of his six corps commanders were against it.<sup>57</sup> Meade finally advanced on 14 July, but Lee had retreated and slipped away. Halleck wired Meade that Lee's escape "created great dissatisfaction in the mind of the President."<sup>58</sup> On hearing this, Meade tendered his resignation, but Halleck refused to accept it.

Lincoln was beside himself in Washington. While he fully appreciated the magnitude of the victory at Gettysburg, he also realized the opportunity that had been lost. Although refraining from direct correspondence with Meade during the weeks after, he did write a personal letter that he never sent. In it, he told Meade how grateful he was for his "magnificent success" and was sorry to learn that he was responsible for any pain to Meade. He told him he did not believe Meade realized the magnitude of Lee's escape. Lincoln said that Lee's destruction, combined with the other recent successes, most notably at Vicksburg, would have

ended the war. He ended by saying that this was not a "prosecution or persecution" to him, but the opportunity was lost and he was "distressed immeasurably." Lincoln filed the letter without ever signing or sending it.<sup>59</sup>

Lincoln was again in the position of watching one of his generals refusing to fight the enemy. Apparently giving up on Meade, he turned his attentions to the West. Although generally pleased with the progress in the West, Lincoln saw an opportunity to use some of Meade's troops in another theater. He wrote Halleck on 19 September, saying that since Lee's 60,000 troops could defend against Meade's 90,000, why not let Meade send 50,000 elsewhere. He pointed out that if Lee could defend with those numbers, Meade should be able to hold with 40,000.<sup>60</sup>

These reinforcements were meant for General Rosecrans, who at that moment was facing a concentration of Confederate troops in Tennessee. At a Cabinet meeting on 24 September, four days after Rosecrans' defeat at Chickamauga, Lincoln ordered troops taken from Meade and sent West to Rosecrans. Rosecrans wired Lincoln in early October, saying that merely holding Chattanooga and East Tennessee would help end the war by influencing elections, but Lincoln was lukewarm to the idea. In his reply, he told Rosecrans the same thing he had been telling Meade, that damaging or destroying the enemy army was a "greater objective."<sup>61</sup> Apparently unhappy with having to coax another General into action, Lincoln consolidated the Departments of Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee under Grant. Grant arrived in Chattanooga on 23 October, and attacked and drove out Confederate forces under General Bragg in November.

Lincoln was beginning to see the end of the war, and started to plan for it. On 8 December 1863, Lincoln sent his annual address to

Congress and included his "Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction." Lincoln took this step to settle the policy of reconstruction in Louisiana, where he hoped to appeal to loyal Unionists and take support away from rebel sympathizers. Louisiana was the first state taken back by the Union, and setting the reconstruction policy there was especially important for the states just coming under Union control, notably Tennessee and Arkansas.<sup>62</sup> This was designed to make it easy for Confederate states to rejoin the Union. It required only ten percent of voters who participated in the 1860 election to swear an oath of allegiance to the United States. Once this was done, the state would be allowed to reestablish a state government and rejoin the Union. By taking the oath, people would be guaranteed a full pardon, and would receive any property except slaves confiscated during the war. Lincoln had no desire to punish the South after the war, and this would accomplish this goal as well as encourage Southern states to quit fighting.<sup>63</sup> Although victory was still far off, Lincoln was planning for it already.

#### The Final Campaigns

On 10 March, Lincoln promoted General Grant to the rank of Lieutenant General, a rank recently authorized by Congress. On 12 March 1864, he made the final change in the Union high command. Issuing General Order No. 98, he appointed Grant as General in Chief and Halleck as Chief of Staff of the Army. This was the final change in the Union high command.

Lincoln and Halleck had sounded out Grant's opinions for campaign plans earlier in the year. Grant originally proposed a campaign of raids, but Lincoln and Halleck wanted Lee's Army destroyed. Grant's final plan for 1864 involved four simultaneous advances with different objectives.



Meade was to attack and follow Lee's Army; General Butler was to conduct a seaborne attack on Richmond similar to McClellan's Peninsula Campaign; General Banks was to attack Mobile from New Orleans, and Sherman was to break up Johnston's Army in Georgia and destroy Confederate resources. All advances were planned to aid each other by not allowing the Confederates to move troops from one theater to another. Coordinated advances would tie down Confederate troops and not allow the Confederate high command to weaken one area to strengthen another.

The plan for 1864 was entirely Grant's. In his first meeting with Lincoln, Grant said: "the President told me he did not want to know what I proposed to do." Grant said he never revealed his plan to Lincoln, Halleck, or Stanton. Lincoln told his new General in Chief what he wanted from him, and had wanted from his generals all through the war:

All he wanted or had ever wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed, pledging himself to use all the power of the government in rendering such assistance.<sup>64</sup>

Grant took the field with the Army of the Potomac, although Meade remained in command. While this appears to be the same mistake made by Davis, Halleck's presence in Washington allowed Grant to stay well informed in the field. All field commanders reported to Halleck, who condensed the information and passed it to Grant.<sup>65</sup> In addition, Halleck and Lincoln had already established a good working relationship, and Halleck could advise or answer any questions Lincoln might have.

Lincoln was finally completely confident in his commanders, and expressed this in a letter to Grant before he left for the Spring campaign of 1864. He told Grant that he wished to express his satisfaction with all he had done, and that Grant should let him know if he needed anything. He

also told Grant "The particulars of your plans I neither know, or seek to know." He assured Grant that he did not wish to "obtrude any constraints or restraints" on him.<sup>66</sup>

This was a considerable change from the same man who directed troop movements and argued over plans with McClellan two years earlier. Lincoln finally had men he trusted in place at the head of his Army, and he showed his trust and confidence in his correspondence. Although he did not usually communicate directly with Grant, he did read all messages between Grant and Halleck. He personally wrote nothing to Grant until 15 June, and then only to comment on a message from Grant to Halleck. In it, Grant said he thought he could get to Petersburg before Lee. Lincoln replied "I begin to see it. You will succeed."<sup>67</sup>

There were times when Lincoln was concerned, but he did not bother Grant with questions. During the Battle of the Wilderness, Grant was out of communications for two days. Desperate for news, Stanton heard that a nineteen year old reporter from the New York Times had arrived from the battle at a military telegraph office, and was trying to wire his story back to New York. He refused to tell Stanton or anyone else anything until he sent his story. Stanton threatened to arrest him, but Lincoln agreed to one hundred words if he came to the White House to tell them first. The reporter brought a message from Grant: "There will be no turning back." When he heard this, Lincoln grabbed the reporter and kissed him!<sup>68</sup>

Lincoln temporarily lost this confidence in July 1864, when the Confederates sent General Early on a raid through the Shenandoah Valley to threaten Washington. With Grant locked in a siege of Petersburg and Sherman unable to take Atlanta, some of the initial euphoria of the Spring had worn off and Lincoln feared for the safety of Washington. Lincoln

wired Grant, asking him to leave whatever troops were necessary for the siege, and return to Washington with the rest to destroy the enemy. He closed by saying this was not an order, just what he thought best.

Grant replied the same day that he felt it would have a "bad effect" if he left Petersburg, then described the forces he detached to handle Early. Lincoln agreed with him, telling Grant he found his answer "very satisfactory."<sup>69</sup> Grant sent General Sheridan to Washington to take command of the forces in the field there and drive Early out of the Shenandoah Valley. He sent orders that Sheridan should position himself south of Early and follow him to the death.<sup>70</sup> Lincoln agreed with this plan, but told Grant that unless watched it "every day, and hour and force it," it would not be done.<sup>71</sup> Grant returned to Washington for one day to confer with General Hunter, the overall commander of the forces in Washington. Lincoln remained concerned for the safety of the Capitol until Sheridan drove Early out in October, perhaps fearing that the victory he was beginning to see would be snatched away at the last minute.

Later in July, Lincoln again wired Grant concerning a message from Grant to Sherman. Grant told Sherman he would make a "desperate attempt" to hold the enemy at Petersburg; Lincoln read the message and was concerned about Grant's intentions. Lincoln told Grant:

Pressed as we are, by lapse of time, I am glad to hear you say this and yet I do hope you may find a way that the effort shall not be desperate in the sense of great loss of life.<sup>72</sup>

This telegram shows that Lincoln, while mostly avoiding direct interference with his General in Chief, was still keeping very close tabs on the war effort. He did not restrict himself to reading only correspondence to and from Halleck, but closely followed the developments in the West.

It also shows his growing concern over the effect of the military stalemate on the upcoming election. As the Presidential election approached, Lincoln's hopes for reelection dimmed. He himself believed he would not be reelected in November, issuing a memorandum on 23 August 1864. Lincoln said that since it was "exceedingly probable" that he would not be reelected, he would cooperate with the President elect to end the war between the election and inauguration. He believed that his opponent would win on the grounds that the Union could not be saved, so Lincoln felt he must try to win before leaving office. This was written before McClellan was nominated by the Democrats; and his declaration that there would be no peace without Union destroyed any hopes the Confederacy had about prevailing until a new President was elected.

Within weeks of this memorandum, Sherman was able to take Atlanta. This victory came at a critical time for Union fortunes, and almost certainly helped Lincoln win a second term. After Sheridan's victory in the Shenandoah Valley, Lincoln returned to minimal correspondence with Grant. He was sure of victory now, and again let his General in Chief conduct his plans without recommendations from the White House. His telegram to Sherman after the fall of Savannah showed the return of the confidence he displayed in May. He admitted to Sherman he was "fearful" when Sherman left Atlanta on his way to the coast, but thought it best not to interfere. He told him now that the glory was all Sherman's, saying, "I believe that none of us went farther than to acquiesce." In closing, Lincoln asked: "But what next? I suppose it will be safer if I leave Gen. Grant and yourself to decide."<sup>73</sup>

Lincoln turned his attention fully to the aftermath of the war from this point. The only correspondence concerning military operations

was a telegram from Stanton to Grant referring to the three man peace delegation from Richmond. Stanton told Grant the President wanted him to know that nothing transpired that should cause him to change his plans or operations.<sup>74</sup> He also asked if his son, recently graduated from Harvard, could serve with Grant with "some nominal rank." He told Grant to answer as though he were not the President, only a friend.<sup>75</sup> Grant agreed and Lincoln's son Robert was commissioned a Captain. Lincoln's telegrams to Grant mainly concerned parole or case reviews for soldiers sentenced to death. He also pardoned all deserters who turned themselves in to a Provost Marshall by 10 May. With the war drawing to an end, Lincoln began working in earnest to start the long process of dealing with the scars of the long and bitter war. Lincoln underscored his conciliatory approach to post war problems in his second Inaugural Address on 4 March 1865. He prayed the "mighty scourge of war" would pass quickly and closed with:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan - to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.<sup>76</sup>

### Conclusions

Lincoln's command structure and personal command style went through definite phases during the Civil War. He began with confidence in his military commanders and advisers, but the debacle at First Bull Run destroyed this confidence. He felt let down by his field commanders, and realized the need for a new General in Chief. He attempted a similar system with McClellan, first placing him in command of the Army of the Potomac, then also promoting him to General in Chief. Again, he was disappointed, this time by McClellan's lack of action.

Leaving McClellan in field command, he tried to assume the role of General in Chief himself. He attempted this in the summer of 1862, one of the worst for Union fortunes. Lincoln realized he needed a General in Chief in Washington. The demands of the Presidency as well as General in Chief were too great to perform either job well, and Lincoln could not afford to give them both his full attention.

He ordered General Halleck to Washington as General in Chief, and seemed satisfied with his performance despite a rough start. However, Lincoln still did not have complete confidence in Halleck. He went around Halleck to his field commanders on others, while correcting others on the proper chain of command on others. He also allowed some of them, most notably McClernand, to bypass Halleck. This was not an efficient arrangement, and one which Lincoln should not have allowed.

By the Battle of Gettysburg, he solved the problem of dual chains of command, telling Hooker that Halleck gave the orders and he obeyed them. He still apparently harbored some doubts about Halleck, and in March 1864 brought General Grant to Washington to replace Halleck as General in Chief. Although Grant was in the field, he was not in command of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln did not repeat the mistake of placing his General in Chief in command of an Army in addition to his other duties, even for a temporary basis. With Grant as General in Chief and Halleck as Chief of Staff, Lincoln had men he trusted in positions authority and influence. Except for a brief lapse in the summer of 1864, Lincoln displayed the confidence in his military command that he evidenced before First Bull Run. He also had an organization remarkably like that we use today.

Lincoln handled a variety of personalities well, and displayed remarkable patience in dealing with his generals. This was most evident

with McClellan, but also with Hooker and Meade. He displayed this especially when trying repeatedly to get these generals to focus on Lee's army as their objective. Lincoln was ahead of his commanders in realizing the true center of gravity of the Confederacy.

Lincoln was a master politician, and used political tools as well as military to influence the war. His timing of the release of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction and Amnesty Policy were motivated by the effect they would have on the military campaign.

Lincoln saw beyond the immediate battles, and kept his focus on his ultimate goal of restoring the Union. He used his political skills as well as his developing military skill throughout the war, never losing sight of his strategic goal. He learned from his mistakes, never repeating them. By the end of 1863, he began focussing on Reconstruction, gradually backing out of the day to day operations of the military. By late 1864, he turned over the operations to Grant; and devoted his efforts to "bind up the nation's wounds." To the end, he did not let himself get caught up in either the immediate frustrations or celebrations of the war. Lincoln never forgot there would be a time when the war would end. Gordon A. Craig, Profesof of Humanities Emeritus at Stanford University, said "wars create as many problems as they solve and that the art of grand strategy is to foresee the outline of the future and be prepared to deal with it."<sup>77</sup> Lincoln realized this from the start.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 35.

<sup>2</sup>Clarence Edward Macartney, Lincoln and his Cabinet (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 40.

<sup>3</sup>Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 35.

<sup>4</sup>T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1952), 21.

<sup>5</sup>James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 339.

<sup>6</sup>James M. McPherson, Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 76.

<sup>7</sup>Williams, Lincoln and his Generals, 20.

<sup>8</sup>Abraham Lincoln, 23 and 27 July 1861, Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV:459.

<sup>9</sup>Lincoln to Halleck, 31 December 1861, Lincoln to Buell, 1 January 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 7. 524, 526.

<sup>10</sup>Lincoln to Buell, 4 January 1862, Buell to Lincoln, 5 January 1862, McClellan to Buell, 6 January 1862, Halleck to Lincoln, 6 January 1862, *Ibid.*, 530-2.

<sup>11</sup>Lincoln to Cameron, 10 January 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:95.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>14</sup>Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant 2 vols., (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc. 1990), II:473.

<sup>15</sup>Lincoln to Halleck, 16 February 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:135.

<sup>16</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 3 February 1862, McClellan to Stanton, 31 January 1862, *Ibid.*, 119-122.

<sup>17</sup>Lincoln, 11 March 1862, *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>18</sup>Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 102.



<sup>19</sup>Stanton to McClellan, 13 March 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:157.

<sup>20</sup>Lincoln to Stanton, 3 April 1862, Ibid., 179.

<sup>21</sup>McClellan to Lincoln, 6 April 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 11, pt. III, 73.

<sup>22</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 9 April 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:185.

<sup>23</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 1 May 1862, Official Records, vol 11, pt. III, 154.

<sup>24</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 9 May 1862, Ibid., 154.

<sup>25</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 18 June 1862, Ibid., 232.

<sup>26</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 19 June 1862, Lincoln to McClellan, 19 June 1862, Ibid., 234, 236.

<sup>27</sup>Lincoln to Fremont, Lincoln to McDowell, 30 May 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:251-52.

<sup>28</sup>Lincoln to Fremont, 9 June 1862, Ibid., 264.

<sup>29</sup>Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, 126.

<sup>30</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 28 June 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 11, pt. III, 269.

<sup>31</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 2 July 1862, Ibid., 286.

<sup>32</sup>Lincoln to Halleck, 4 July 1862, Ibid., 294.

<sup>33</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 13 July 1862, Ibid., 319.

<sup>34</sup>Hattaway, and Jones, How the North Won, 223.

<sup>35</sup>Stephen E. Ambrose, Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 76.

<sup>36</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 6 September 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:407.

<sup>37</sup>Ambrose, Halleck, 76.

<sup>38</sup>Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 240.

<sup>39</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 8 September 1862, 10 September 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 19, pt. II, 210, 232.

<sup>40</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, Ibid., 270.

<sup>41</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 15 September 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:426.

<sup>42</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 13 October 1862, *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>43</sup>Lincoln to McClellan, 24 October 1862, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 19, pt. II, 485.

<sup>44</sup>Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, 180.

<sup>45</sup>Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:433.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 518-19.

<sup>47</sup>McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 577-578

<sup>48</sup>Ambrose, Halleck, 110.

<sup>49</sup>Philip Van Doren Stern, ed., The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), 750.

<sup>50</sup>Lincoln to Hooker, 5 June 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 27, pt. I, 30.

<sup>51</sup>Lincoln to Hooser, 11 June 1863, *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>52</sup>Lincoln to Hooker, 14 June 1863, Hooker to Lincoln, 16 June 1863, Lincoln to Hooker, 16 June 1863, *Ibid.*, 39, 45, 47.

<sup>53</sup>Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, 262.

<sup>54</sup>Meade to Halleck, 4 July 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 27, pt. I, 78.

<sup>55</sup>Lincoln to Halleck, 6 July 1863, *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>56</sup>Halleck to Meade, 8 July 1863, *Ibid.*, 82-84.

<sup>57</sup>Meade to Halleck, 12 July 1863, Meade to Halleck, 13 July 1863, *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>58</sup>Halleck to Meade, 14 July 1863, *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>59</sup>Lincoln to Meade, 14 July 1863, in Van Doren Stern, Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln, 765.

<sup>60</sup>Lincoln to Halleck, 19 September 1863, *Ibid.*, 781.

<sup>61</sup>Lincoln to Rosecrans, 4 October 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 30, pt. IV, 79.

<sup>62</sup>Phillip Shaw Paludan, The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 249.

<sup>63</sup>James M. McPherson, Ordeal by Fire (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1982), 3 vol., vol II, 391.

<sup>64</sup>Grant, Memoirs, vol. II, 473-74.

<sup>65</sup>Ambrose, Halleck, 164.

<sup>66</sup>Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 300.

<sup>67</sup>Lincoln to Grant, 15 June 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 40, pt. II, 47.

<sup>68</sup>Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 300

<sup>69</sup>Lincoln to Grant, 10 July 1864, Grant to Lincoln, 10 July 1864, Lincoln to Grant, 11 July 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 40, pt. III, 121, 122, 143.

<sup>70</sup>Grant to Halleck, 1 August 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 40, pt. II, 558.

<sup>71</sup>Lincoln to Grant, 3 August 1864, in Basler, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, VII:476.

<sup>72</sup>Lincoln to Grant, 17 July 1864, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 40, pt. III, 289.

<sup>73</sup>Lincoln to Sherman, 26 December 1864, in Basler, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, VIII:182.

<sup>74</sup>Stanton to Grant, 4 February 1865, *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>75</sup>Lincoln to Grant, 19 January 1865, *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>76</sup>Abraham Lincoln, 4 March 1865, *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>77</sup>Gordon A. Craig, "The Political Leader as Strategist," in Makers of Modern Strategy ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 503.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE DRAFT

When the Civil War began, the militaries of the Union and Confederacy raised their Armed Forces the way American governments always had; they accepted volunteers from the states. Both sides had a small regular Army, much too small to fight the war alone, so the Federal governments called on the states to supply the necessary manpower.

Initially, this process was approximately the same on both sides. This is not particularly surprising since the federal governments and militaries on both sides had, until recently, been one system. The process started with the President petitioning Congress for a specified number of troops. Once Congress approved the number and duration of their commitment, the President called on the individual states for their share of the total number. The number each state contributed was usually determined by population. Once notified, the governors allowed men to go out and recruit volunteers. The men who recruited troops were usually well known within their city or county, and may or may not have had any military training. Once approximately one hundred men volunteered, they were formed into a company. When ten companies were formed, they were formed into a regiment.

Once units were formed, the men voted for their company and field grade officers. Although not always militarily sound, the election of officers was an accepted practice when the Civil War began. Since most

units came from a small area, the men usually shared a geographic and ethnic similarity, and many volunteered because they knew who they would serve under. Lincoln and Davis were both elected officers during their military service, Davis as a Colonel of the First Mississippi Rifles and Lincoln as a Captain of the Illinois Militia.

After the men elected the company and field grade officers, those officers elected the Regimental officers. The governors actually commissioned the Regimental officers, but usually agreed with those elected by the junior officers. Once the units were completely filled out and officers elected, they headed out to war. Regiments were kept together as a rule, and formed part of a larger unit under a General Officer from the regular Army. The state government usually outfitted the men with weapons and equipment, resulting in wide variations in uniforms and weapons.

The Civil War changed all this. For the first time in American military experience, the number of men required to fight was too large and the war too long to rely solely on volunteers. Both sides enacted laws drafting men into national military service. The systems they used were different, and both presidents were challenged by governors concerning these laws. Their handling of these challenges was critical to the military effort of both sides.

#### The Confederacy And Conscription

Davis and the Confederate Congress moved quickly to provide military forces for the defense of the Confederacy. On 26 February 1861, Davis wrote to the Provisional Congress, asking for legislation requiring the states to turn over to the Federal Government "all arms and munitions now in the forts, arsenals, and navy-yards" recently seized.<sup>1</sup> Two days

later, the Congress passed the first act to raise forces for the Confederacy. Beyond the arms and munitions he asked for, the act placed Davis in charge of all military operations and authorized him to receive:

such forces now in the service of said States as may be tendered, or who may volunteer, by consent of heir State, in such numbers as he may require.<sup>2</sup>

The Act allowed Davis to accept the men in organizations up to regimental size. The following day, Secretary of War Walker notified the governors of the Confederate states that Davis planned to proceed immediately with the provision to receive forces.

On 6 March 1861, the Congress established the Confederate Army, limiting its size to 9,420 enlisted men. On the same day, Congress further authorized Davis to employ the state militia, and accept up to 100,000 volunteers for Federal service.<sup>3</sup> On 8 April 1861, Secretary Walker wrote to the Governors, asking all states except Florida for three thousand volunteers "drilled, equipped, and held in instant readiness."<sup>4</sup> Walker asked Florida to provide only one thousand five hundred men. Again on 16 April, he asked for five thousand more from each state, requiring only two thousand from Florida.

The Confederacy fought the first year of the war with an all volunteer force. By the end of that year, however, it became apparent the war would last longer than anyone had anticipated in early 1861. Davis addressed the first session of the permanent Confederate Congress on 25 February 1862 and told them he believed the war would continue "through a series of years."<sup>5</sup> One week later, in response to a House resolution asking for military requirements, Davis estimated an additional 300,000 men, in addition to those already in the field, would be required to continue the war.<sup>6</sup>

Faced with these formidable requirements and the expiring enlistments of the Confederacy's most experienced troops, Davis asked the Congress for drastic action. On 28 March 1862, he wrote calling for a "plain and simple" law declaring all persons eighteen to thirty-five years old and "rightfully subject to military duty" to be held in the service of the Confederacy.<sup>7</sup> On 16 April 1862, the Congress passed "An Act to Further Provide for the Public Defense," normally referred to as the Conscription Act.

The Conscription Act placed all white men ages eighteen to thirty-five in Federal military service for three years. In addition, all current enlistees were extended for three years from the date of their original enlistment. Five days later, the Congress passed another act listing occupations exempted from military service. The list of exemptions was long, and included members of the state executive and judicial branches, state legislators, mail carriers, boat pilots, and numerous other occupations. Davis asked for a simple method, and this seemed to fit the bill. All white men in the specified age group who were not involved in any of the exempted occupations were required to perform three years of military service or provide a substitute. In practice, however, the Conscription Act proved to be anything but simple. Within days, outraged governors wrote and telegraphed Davis, accusing him of subverting the rights of the States. Before the end of the war, the Act would be revised six times in attempts to appease the states while keeping sufficient forces in the field.

Davis's most vocal opponent was Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown. Throughout the war, he and Davis engaged in an often heated correspondence. The real fireworks came between April and December of 1862 as each man

staked out his position on conscription. Brown first wrote Davis on 22 April 1862, concerned about exemptions to conscription. Apparently unaware of the exemptions passed by Congress the day prior, Brown said he could not allow his Legislature, judges, or numerous other state officers to be drafted. He expressed extreme displeasure with a provision allowing the Confederate government to fill existing companies with conscripts, possibly breaking up some state units. Brown asked that all Georgia units remain intact. He closed telling Davis that the Conscription Act gave the President the power to disorganize state militia, and "cripple or destroy" state governments.<sup>8</sup>

Davis replied in a short note on 28 April, attempting to reassure Brown he had no intention of destroying state governments or crippling militia. He said the Confederate government would not interfere with the present organization of Georgia units, and reminded Brown that the Confederate Constitution granted Congress the power to raise armies.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently not satisfied with a one paragraph answer to his letter, Brown wrote again on 8 May 1862. In a five-page letter, he questioned the necessity of conscription. Brown pointed out that raising men was never the problem, arming them was, and conscription would not solve that.

One part of the act that particularly troubled Brown concerned the appointment of officers. Congress allowed Davis the power to fill vacancies in the officer ranks, excepting only company level officers who were elected by the men. This applied to all troops in Federal service, including state militia employed by the Confederacy. Brown argued vehemently against this, saying the appointment of militia officers belonged to the Governors alone. Brown said the Conscription Act was a



"palpable violation of the Constitution," and he could not "consent to have anything to do with the enrollment of the conscripts in this State." If the Federal government required more troops from the states, Brown recommended Davis tell "the Executive" the number required and he would receive them, "organized and officered as the Constitution directs."<sup>10</sup>

Davis replied in a long letter of his own on 29 May 1862. Although specifically addressing Brown, Davis had this letter printed in pamphlet form and distributed. He wrote this letter in response to the criticisms of Brown and "other eminent citizens who entertain similar opinions."<sup>11</sup> Prominent among these "eminent citizens" citizens was his own vice-president, Alexander Stephens, who actually helped Brown write some of his letters to Davis.

Davis started by saying he intended to give his views of the "powers of the Confederate government over its armies and militia", then very carefully addressed Brown's objections. Davis reminded Brown that the full Congress had debated the Conscription Act and upheld it; also the Attorney General ruled favorably on it. He contended the law was necessary, if for no other reason than preventing the loss of "numerous regiments" of twelve month volunteers. He continued that the Constitution guaranteed Congress the power to raise armies, and the law did no more than that. He said:

None can doubt that the conscription law is calculated and intended to "raise armies"; it is, therefore, "necessary and proper" for the execution of that power, and is constitutional.

He went on to dispute the idea that he was attempting to subvert the power of the states over their militia. After a lengthy definition of the word militia, Davis said that Congress merely held the power to organize militia and call them forth to repel invasion. The militia was not part of the

Confederate Army, and would never be. He assured Brown the state still held the power to appoint officers, and "the State has not surrendered the power to call them forth to execute State laws." Acknowledging that conscripts and militia was necessarily drawn from the same body of men, Davis continued that this was an extreme case and the needs were great. He reminded Brown, "Under normal circumstances, the power thus delegated to Congress [to raise armies] is scarcely felt by the States.", but in this instance necessity forced the Confederacy to call "not for any militia, but for men to compose the armies for the Confederate States." In closing, Davis explained wars may be offensive or defensive, and an offensive war provided the clearest example of the constitutionality of conscription:

If this Government can not call on its arms-bearing population otherwise than as militia, and if the militia can only be called forth to repel invasion, we should be utterly helpless to vindicate our honor or protect our rights.<sup>12</sup>

This did not have the effect Davis hoped for. Brown did not write to Davis for three weeks, but wrote several telegrams to Secretary of War Randolph. Brown was apparently trying to exempt Georgians by enlarging his militia; on 17 June 1862, he wrote to Randolph to complain about Confederate enrollment officers enrolling his militia officers. Randolph replied that only men active in the militia on 16 April 1862 were exempt.<sup>13</sup>

Four days later, Brown again turned his pen on Davis. In an even longer letter than before, he took issue with every point Davis made in his response of 29 May. The tone of his letter was still cordial, but more confrontational than his last. He opened, "Entertaining as I do the highest respect for your opinions . . . your argument fails to sustain the constitutionality of the act." Brown told Davis the Congress was not the judge of the constitutionality of a law, the courts were. He included many

quotes from James Madison and the original Constitutional Convention about the tendency of the Executive branch of government to overstep its bounds. He disagreed with Davis's closing argument, saying if troops became necessary for offensive war, Southerners would realize it and volunteer. He told Davis, "To doubt this would seem to be to doubt the intelligence and patriotism of the people and their competency for self government." Referring to Davis's argument that the needs of the Confederacy were desperate; he asked, "In the midst of such pressing danger why was it that there was no necessity for any militia?" He answered the question for him, telling Davis conscription allowed him to appoint officers of his choice, removing that power from the governors. He closed asking Davis to call on him when he could "without violation of constitutional obligations resting upon me, do any service to the great cause."<sup>14</sup>

Davis replied on 10 July, obviously growing tired of the argument. He told Brown it was never his intention to engage in a "protracted discussion." He continued that he never meant the Congress could judge constitutionality, nor did he believe "the judgement of Congress was conclusive against a state." He told Brown he did not share his concern over states rights, and closed saying:

The right of each State to judge in the last resort whether its reserved powers had been usurped by the General Government is too familiar and well settled a principle to admit of discussion.<sup>15</sup>

Brown wrote back on 22 July, opening with a blast. He told Davis he was happy to see him disclaim the position attributed to him by "every fair-minded man who has read your letter of the 29th of May last, and has construed plain English words according to their established meaning." He again pointed out that the Conscription Act allowed Davis the power to appoint militia officers; and reminded Davis that he himself turned down a

Brigadier Generalship offered by President Polk on the grounds that the President had no right to appoint a General of State volunteers.<sup>16</sup>

This letter closed the first round between Davis and Brown, with neither man moving an inch toward the other's opinion. In a message to Congress on 13 August 1862, Davis told the Legislators "I am of the opinion that prudence dictates some provision for the increase of the Army in the event of emergencies not now anticipated." He was concerned about a recent increase in Union forces, and feared that it might be necessary to increase the size of the Confederate Army while Congress was not in session. He specifically mentioned the possibility of raising the age provision of the Conscription Act "so as to embrace persons between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five years."<sup>17</sup>

On 27 September 1862, the Congress passed an amendment to the Conscription Act, raising the eligible age to 45 according to Davis's wishes. They further authorized the President to suspend the Act in any locality where it may be "impracticable" to execute it, and to receive troops in those localities under any previous act of Congress. On 11 October 1862, they also repealed some of the original exemptions. The actual order to extend the conscription age was issued on 20 October, and only raised the eligible age to forty years old, not forty-five as approved by Congress. This was due to a recommendation from Secretary of War Randolph. Randolph informed Davis that raising the eligible age to forty-five would increase the Army beyond the capabilities of the Confederate supply system. Davis agreed and lowered the age according to Randolph's estimates.

This opened the door for Governor Brown to renew his protest, and he did so with renewed vigor. Brown wrote to Davis on 18 October 1862, telling him he had protested earlier but did not actively resist conscription "on account of the emergencies of the country growing out of the neglect to call upon the State for a sufficient amount of additional force." He made it clear that this time was different. He argued that there was no reason to call for more troops now, citing the recent "brilliant successes" of the Confederate Army. He accused Davis of taking the only men he had left to form his militia, destroying the state military organization and leaving "her people utterly powerless to protect their own families even against their own slaves." Brown again volunteered to raise any troops needed if Davis would only ask him for volunteers instead of conscripts as Congress allowed him to do. In closing, Brown told him: "I cannot permit the enrollment of conscripts under the late act of Congress."<sup>18</sup>

The Confederacy had no Supreme Court, but several state Supreme Courts had already ruled in favor of conscription. Davis, however, temporarily suspended conscription in Georgia until the Georgia Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of the Act.<sup>19</sup> Much to Brown's dismay, the Georgia Court ruled in favor of the Confederate government and conscription. Brown appealed to the Georgia Legislature next, declaring that the court decision was "rendered under heavy outside pressure." A committee appointed by the legislature sided with Brown, but only by a slim margin, and the session ended without action by the legislature.<sup>20</sup> By December 1862, Brown gave up and allowed Confederate officers to begin enrolling Georgians for conscription.

Davis sent his annual message to Congress on 12 January 1863. Secretary of War Seddon informed him earlier the Confederate Army still did not have the numbers it required and Davis asked Congress to revise the exemption policy to fill the ranks.<sup>21</sup> On 14 April 1863 the Congress passed an act exempting mail carriers; but on 1 May 1863 they repealed several exemptions. The most important exemption repealed affected all state officers previously exempted by the Governors. The new law required any state officers exempted by the Governor to be approved by the state legislature in its next session. All officers not legally exempted by the legislature were eligible for military service. Brown answered this by exempting all civil and military officers until the next session, when the legislature upheld his actions.<sup>22</sup> Despite this maneuvering, the correspondence between Brown and Davis became considerably more cordial. Brown still denounced conscription, but for the most part confined his remarks to the state legislature.

Davis did not ask for another increase until his annual message on 7 December 1863. Again acting on the advice of Secretary of War Seddon, Davis asked Congress to increase the Army by ending substitution, overhauling exemption laws, and replacing "enlisted cooks, . . . wagoners, and other employes [sic] in the Army, by negroes."<sup>23</sup> This is the first mention of using Negroes in the Confederate military service, and the Congress did not act on it. The Congress prohibited substitution in an amendment approved on 28 December 1863, but took no further action on Davis's recommendations.

On 23 December 1863 Governor Brown made another attempt to change Davis's mind about conscripts electing their own officers. In a letter to Davis, he enclosed a resolution passed by the Georgia legislature demanding

that Georgia troops be allowed to elect their own officers. Davis did not respond to Brown this time, and merely forwarded the resolution to the Secretary of War for his comments. Seddon returned it to Davis saying it was a matter for the Congress, but he considered the claim "unfounded."<sup>24</sup> Brown appears not to have challenged Davis again on this resolution. In the next exchange between the two in January 1864, there is no mention of it. This time Brown passed a resolution from the Georgia legislature vowing to "prosecute the present war with utmost vigor and energy." Davis answered, thanking Brown for the copy, and praising Georgia for its war effort.

In another message to Congress on 13 February 1864, Davis asked the legislators to extend the Conscription Act. Congress obliged him and on 1 Mar 1864 passed another amendment to the Conscription Act. Under the new law, all those currently serving were extended for the duration of the war. Additionally, more exemptions were repealed and the eligible age extended again, this time encompassing all white men from seventeen to fifty. This made thousands more eligible, but another part of the amendment allowed Governors to exempt indispensable officials. Brown took full advantage of this provision, and on 9 April 1864, he issued a proclamation exempting all civil and military officers, the Attorney General, solicitors general, and masters of chancery.<sup>25</sup>

Davis did not address the subject of conscription again until 7 November 1864. With the war going badly for the Confederacy, Davis appealed to Congress to repeal all exemptions and allow the military the discretion to keep sufficient numbers of people in critical public services. He also returned to the subject of using slaves. Davis recommended that slaves be employed as pioneers and engineer laborers. He

suggested the Congress approve 40,000 of these positions, with the provision that those slaves be freed after the war as a reward "for past faithful service." He advised against using slaves as soldiers, however, citing a "broad moral distinction" between using slaves to defend their homes and inciting insurrection.<sup>26</sup>

Brown was adamantly opposed to Davis's recommendations, and used the opportunity to rally the legislature and state opinion. In a message to the state legislature, Brown said this would prohibit anyone from performing their occupation without specific approval. He recommended the state legislature pass a resolution demanding their representatives in the Confederate Congress oppose this amendment.<sup>27</sup> Before he could get the resolution passed, General Sherman and his Army caused an early end to the legislative session.

The Confederate Congress was apparently still debating Davis's proposals in February 1865 when he again wrote; this time asking for "prompt action for adding to our strength in the field."<sup>28</sup> News from the field was bad, and Davis began to change his mind about arming slaves. In a letter written on 21 February, Davis said the situation required "employing for the defense of our country all the able bodied men we have, without distinction of color."<sup>29</sup>

Congress finally sent Davis a bill on 11 March 1865. Davis replied on 13 March and cited two disagreements with the bill. First, he opposed a section allowing him no discretion over exemptions. In a separate letter, he pointed out that the new bill did not change the number of men currently exempt. He told the legislators he wanted "A law of a few lines repealing all class exemptions."<sup>30</sup> He also mentioned that he



read of the passage of a bill to use Negroes as soldiers, but had not seen it yet.

There was no more correspondence concerning conscription. By this time, it was apparent to most southerners that the war was over. The bill Congress sent to Davis in March was never enacted, and the Bureau of Conscription was abolished on 29 March 1865. Governor Brown fought Davis till the end, and through his considerable efforts, supplied only 8,992 conscripts. By his own records, Brown exempted 15,000 men from conscription. All but 1,450 of these were exempted by enrollment in the militia. Georgians did, however, volunteer in large numbers. More than 26,000 entered the Confederate service between April 1862 and February 1865.<sup>31</sup>

#### The Union and the Draft

Like most everyone else at the beginning of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln badly underestimated the number of men he would eventually require. The day after Fort Sumter, Lincoln called for 75,000 militia for 90 days service, and this call drove North Carolina and several other states to secede rather than take up arms against fellow Southerners. He took a somewhat more realistic outlook two weeks later. On 3 May 1861, he issued a proclamation calling for 42,034 three year volunteers for infantry and cavalry and increasing the regular Army by eight regiments of infantry, one regiment of cavalry, and one regiment of artillery. Additionally, the proclamation called for the enlistment of 18,000 seamen for not less than one year and not more than three.<sup>32</sup>

Lincoln took these steps without congressional approval since the Congress was not in session. When the legislators returned on 4 July for a

special session called by Lincoln, he laid out the steps he had taken in their absence. In a lengthy address, Lincoln set the tone he would maintain throughout the war. He asked:

Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness? Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?

Lincoln continued, telling the legislature that the measures taken "whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon . . . trusting, then as now, that Congress would readily ratify them." Lincoln further recommended that Congress "place at the control of the government" a minimum of 400,000 men.<sup>33</sup>

Congress agreed with these suggestions, and approved all Lincoln's prior actions to raise troops. Lincoln did not call again on Congress for troops for more than a year; but in July 1862, there was a flurry of activity to raise more men for the Union army. Lincoln began on 1 July 1862 by calling on the governors for 300,000 three year volunteers; the quotas for each state determined according to population.<sup>34</sup> On 17 July, Congress approved an amendment to the Uniform Militia Act of 1792. The amendment authorized the President to call up militia for no more than nine months, accept up to 100,000 infantry volunteers for nine months and to accept volunteers "in such numbers as may be presented" for twelve months to fill current regiments. In addition to these powers, the Congress granted the President the power to "make all necessary rules and regulations" for enrolling the militia. The Congress further ruled that enrollment of the militia "shall in all cases include all able bodied male citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five."<sup>35</sup> This significantly increased Lincoln's power to raise troops, and appears to have laid the foundation for the Draft Act. Surprisingly, there is no correspondence

recorded between Lincoln or the War Department and the Congress asking for these measures. Regardless of whether he asked for the amendment or not, he wasted no time using his new authority. Five days after Congress passed the amendment, Lincoln wrote to the Secretary of War concerning a militia call up. Concerned about asking for more men so close to his 1 July call for 300,000, Lincoln authorized Stanton to enroll state militia to fill old regiments, by draft if necessary.<sup>36</sup>

Although this was not the Draft Act that would cause so many problems in the following year, there was evidently enough dissatisfaction to cause Lincoln to issue a proclamation on 24 Sep 1862. In it, Lincoln claimed that any person interfering with the enrollment of volunteers or resisting militia drafts was "affording aid and comfort to rebels against the authority of the United States.", and was subject to martial law. Furthermore, the writ of habeas corpus was suspended for any person arrested by military authorities or held in military facilities.<sup>37</sup>

On 3 March 1863, Congress passed "An Act For Enrolling and Calling out the National Forces, and for other Purposes," more popularly known as the Draft Act. In this Act, they called for all able bodied male citizens, and foreign born males who declared their intention to become citizens, between the ages of twenty and forty-five to make up the national forces. This act had some similarities to the Conscription Act in the Confederacy: eligible men could avoid service by providing a replacement or paying three hundred dollars, and there were some exemptions. The exemptions were not nearly as numerous as in the Confederacy, and were not usually occupation dependent. The only exceptions to this were federal and state government officials and judges. The eligible men were split into two groups; all men between twenty and thirty-five years old and unmarried men between

thirty-five and forty-five were designated as the first to be called. All married men between thirty-five and forty-five were required to enroll, but would be called last. All draftees were required to serve for three years or for the duration of the war.

Once again there is no record of correspondence between Lincoln or Stanton and the Congress concerning the administration's desires on the content of this act, so it cannot be determined if this were Lincoln's plan or Congress'. In Battle Cry of Freedom, James McPherson attributes it to Congress, in reaction to an imminent loss of men similar to the one faced by the Confederacy one year prior.<sup>38</sup> There is no documentation in the Official Records or in Lincoln's papers to suggest he requested this of Congress.

Regardless of who the ideas originated with, the Lincoln administration moved quickly. The Provost-Marshal-General, Colonel James B. Fry, proposed the methods for enrolling and drafting men in two letters to Secretary of War Stanton in May 1863. In his first letter, he recommended the first call be for deficiencies from the previous call. He advised Stanton to begin drafting men by state as soon as enrollment was complete in that state, not waiting for all states to complete their enrollment. Warning that calling for too large a number of men would flood the training system, he recommended "several successive drafts," and further suggested no call for new men occur until a draft for deficiencies was well underway.<sup>39</sup> In a second letter, Fry strongly advised against announcing a draft by Presidential proclamation. He recommended the War Department give the total number of men required for each draft to the Provost-Marshal-General alone. As his reason for this, Fry said,

If the whole number be called out by proclamation, every man who knows how to cipher proves for his friends that the quota for his State, district, and county are not correct, and this creates a bad feeling.<sup>40</sup>

Lincoln and Stanton followed this advice throughout the war. On 7 July, the Adjutant General sent the order to the Provost-Marshal to commence the draft.

Lincoln realized there could be problems with the new law, especially in New York. New York was the largest and most powerful state in the Union, and was controlled by Democrats. Lincoln wrote a private and confidential letter to Governor Horatio Seymour three weeks after the Draft Act passed, telling him he hoped they might become "better acquainted." He told Seymour that their positions were similar; Lincoln was head of the nation, and Seymour head of the greatest state in the nation. Pointing out that they could not have a difference of purpose in maintaining the integrity of the nation, he hoped any difference of opinion "as to the means . . . should be as small as possible." He closed telling Seymour the cooperation of New York was "indispensable."<sup>41</sup>

Seymour's reply was exactly what Lincoln wanted to hear. He told Lincoln: "For the preservation of this Union I am ready to make every sacrifice."<sup>42</sup> Three months later, Seymour was put to the test. Most New Yorkers did not believe a draft would ever take place in their state. Governor Seymour himself believed he could fill federal quotas with volunteers, and believed the courts would rule that the draft was unconstitutional before it was ever required.<sup>43</sup> Enrollment in New York City ended in June 1863, and the draft was scheduled to begin the following month on Saturday , 11 July. When it finally dawned on the citizens of New

York that the draft would actually happen, tensions began to rise. On Monday, 13 July, the city erupted in the most violent civil disturbance in American history.

The mayor of New York City wired Secretary of War Stanton on 13 July, telling him resistance against the draft had sparked a riot which threatened to become serious.<sup>44</sup> The following day, General Halleck ordered two New York regiments from Pennsylvania to New York City. Halleck also wired Governor Seymour, telling him the regiments were on the way; and also passing a request from Stanton that Seymour call out sufficient militia to stop the disturbance. With a pursuit of Lee's army expected, Halleck informed Seymour that more troops from the field would be sent only "if absolutely necessary."<sup>45</sup> To help in the crisis, the draft was temporarily suspended in New York City, Buffalo, and Brooklyn.

Lincoln did not declare martial law in New York; and aside from sending the two New York regiments, the federal government did little to quell the riot. Local authorities and militia units were able to stop the rioting with the aid of the New York regiments by 17 July. However, the suspension of the draft was causing concern around the country. Lincoln and Stanton received several telegrams from the other governors, warning them of disastrous consequences if the draft could not be carried out in New York. Typical was a telegram from the governor of Iowa, Samuel J. Kirkwood. He advised Stanton that allowing resistance to the draft in New York would preclude enforcement anywhere else. He closed saying, "For God's sake let there be no compromising or half-way measures."<sup>46</sup> Stanton assured him Lincoln had no intention of allowing the rioters to stop the draft. He told Kirkwood, "The draft will be enforced in New York City.

You need entertain no apprehensions of compromising or half way measures."<sup>47</sup>

Lincoln took a very definite measure to ensure the riots would not prevent the draft from taking place. On 15 July, he appointed General John Dix, a New York Democrat, to command the Department of the East, which included New York. Dix was well respected in New York, but also had a reputation as a fierce opponent of treason while Commander of the Maryland Department. With this appointment, Lincoln sent a clear message that the draft would be carried out in New York.<sup>48</sup>

On 19 July, Governor Seymour sent a representative to Washington to discuss the events in the state. On 1 August, he sent telegrams to both Lincoln and Stanton asking them to suspend the draft in New York "until I can send you a communication I am preparing."<sup>49</sup> Lincoln replied within hours, asking when he could expect Seymour's communication and if he was concerned about any other parts of the state besides New York City and the immediate vicinity.<sup>50</sup>

Seymour sent the promised communication on 3 August; a long, eloquent argument against the quotas imposed on New York and the constitutionality of the law. He began by explaining that the riots spread because he had no warning that the draft was about to occur. Without this knowledge, he was unable to call out militia in advance. He called the quotas for New York "glaringly unjust", and cautioned:

the abandonment of voluntary enlistment for a forced conscription will prove to be unfortunate. . . it will not secure either so many or so effective men.

He argued that people will make "great sacrifices" if they believe their rights are protected; and the best way to protect their rights was to submit the law to the courts to determine its constitutionality. He told

Lincoln a judgment for the draft would strengthen their cause; a judgment against would merely cause a return to volunteering. He assured Lincoln, "No evils are to be feared if the law should be pronounced unconstitutional." He closed asking again to suspend the draft until a judgment was obtained, saying this was "but a small concession for our Government to make to our people."<sup>51</sup>

Lincoln answered on 7 August, and wasted no time letting Seymour know the draft would be enforced. In his second sentence Lincoln said, "I cannot consent to suspend the draft in New York as you request, because, among other things, time is too important." He acknowledged Seymour's complaint concerning the quotas for New York, and reduced them in New York City districts for this draft only. After that, he proposed a reenrollment in those districts. He also told Seymour he would be notified before each future draft to allow him to prepare for protests. Addressing the constitutionality of the law, he said he had no objection to a U. S. Supreme Court ruling, "In fact, I should be willing to facilitate the obtaining of it, but I cannot consent to lose the time while it is being obtained."<sup>52</sup>

Seymour sent a letter to Lincoln that same day, telling him he had evidence that the enrollment figures for New York were wrong, and "shameless fraud" may have been committed. He said the honor of the country was at stake, and he would not "spare any effort" to stop the draft.<sup>53</sup> The following day, he replied to Lincoln's telegram of 3 August. He appreciated the concessions Lincoln made, but regretted his decision to go on with the draft. After telling Lincoln that he need only ask for volunteers and they would be provided, he took a more confrontational tone. Citing a difference in quotas between comparably sized congressional



districts in Manhattan, Long Island, and Staten Island; he pointed out that nine Democratic districts were assigned the same number of conscripts as nineteen Republican districts. He told Lincoln, "You cannot and will not fail to right these gross wrongs."<sup>54</sup>

Lincoln felt he needed to make his views on the draft clear to the public. So, much like Davis's reply to Governor Brown, he prepared a constitutional argument. He obviously intended this for public release, beginning by saying it was "proper that misunderstanding between the public and the public servant should be avoided." He listed the motives for enlistment, then stated that the Union already obtained all the men they could by that method. He then described the Draft Act, and assured people that its only purpose was to raise and support an army. He emphasized this, saying "There is nothing else in it." He argued that the power to raise and support armies was granted to the Congress by the Constitution, and asked "How can Congress exercise a given power in an un-constitutional mode?" Continuing on this theme, he stated:

The power is given fully, completely, unconditionally. It is not a power to raise armies if State authorities consent; nor if the men to compose the armies are entirely willing, but it is a power to raise and support armies given to Congress by the Constitution without an "if."

He continued that not everyone who avoided service was "unpatriotic", but said "every patriot should willingly take his chance under a law made with great care." He also defended the three hundred dollar substitution clause, saying if government did not set the price, rich men would drive it up. He said in this way, the law worked for the poor, not against them as some believed. He concluded asking: "Shall we shrink from the necessary means to maintain our free government . . . Has the manhood of our race run out?"<sup>55</sup>

Lincoln never released this paper, although he obviously put considerable thought into it. Perhaps he thought it best to follow the advice Colonel Fry gave concerning the calls for troops, and somehow distance himself from the issue by not releasing any opinions on it. Regardless of his reasons, the paper gives a clear insight into his thinking on the draft, and shows his determination to carry it out.

Lincoln and Seymour resumed their correspondence on 11 August, when Lincoln replied to Seymour's telegram of 8 August. He authorized the reenrollment of more districts to ensure the accuracy of the count, but reminded Seymour "No part of my former letter is repudiated by not being restated in this, or for any other cause."<sup>56</sup>

By this time, General Dix was in New York and preparing to resume the draft. He had been requesting state militia assistance from Governor Seymour since 30 July, saying he did not want to bring federal troops in from the field to enforce the draft.<sup>57</sup> He advised Washington he was not getting much cooperation, and on 16 August Stanton sent him a proclamation signed by Lincoln. The proclamation called out the state militia, and ordered them to report to General Dix. The place and date on the proclamation were left blank; Dix was to fill them in if he needed to call out the militia. Stanton told Dix that Lincoln desired him to call on Seymour first, and let him help or "shoulder the burden of refusing."<sup>58</sup> The following day, Dix wired Halleck concerning his preparations to resume the draft. He emphasized his determination to avoid a repeat of the previous attempt to draft New Yorkers. He told Halleck, "You need not fear the rioters, if they show themselves, will be tenderly treated." He repeated to Halleck his orders to his troops: there would no blank cartridges, and mobs would not be merely dispersed. He told his men to

follow the rioters and deal with them so that the same persons "should never be assembled again."<sup>59</sup> Clearly Lincoln made the right choice of generals to resume the draft.

Perhaps seeing he was not going to stop the draft with a constitutional challenge, Seymour tried a new approach. He telegraphed Lincoln on 16 August, asking that volunteers be accepted in place of men who had already been drafted.<sup>60</sup> Lincoln replied that any volunteer meant one less man had to be drafted, but refused to allow substitutes for those already drafted. He again reminded Seymour of the urgency to raise troops, telling him, "My purpose is to be just and fair, and yet not to lose time."<sup>61</sup>

The draft resumed three days later, on 19 August. There were no riots, and the process went smoothly. Although he protested again that he was not notified the draft had commenced, Governor Seymour did call the militia when asked by General Dix. Dix wired Halleck on 20 August that everything was going well. He said that Governor Seymour "held out to the last and then backed out."<sup>62</sup>

Seymour did not quit trying to influence Lincoln, however. On 21 August, he complained to Lincoln again that he was not notified when the latest draft started. He also claimed great success in recruiting through offering bounties, and wanted to know how these recruits would be counted toward New York's quota. Finally, he accused other states of recruiting New Yorkers to fill their own quotas.<sup>63</sup> The following day, Seymour telegraphed Lincoln to inform him he was sending a Major Stonehouse to ask some questions for him.<sup>64</sup>

Lincoln answered Seymour's telegram of 21 August by enclosing a report from the Provost-Marshal. He assured Seymour that all New York

volunteers were accounted for and credited to New York. He also found Seymour's claims of recruiting by other states in New York baseless. The final correspondence from Lincoln concerning the New York draft is a memo to Stanton, giving him a notice to be telegraphed and mailed to Governor Seymour each time the draft was conducted in New York.

The exchange between Lincoln and Seymour concerning the draft was over, and Lincoln left no doubt that the federal government meant to carry out the draft. He called for more than one million men before the war ended; each time calling first for volunteers and drafting to fill deficiencies. On 4 July 1864, Congress voted to allow Lincoln to call for any number of one, two or three year volunteers at any time. Beside the draft of 1863, The Provost-Marshal's annual report to the Secretary of War in November 1864 showed that two drafts actually occurred in 1864 to fill deficiencies in calls for volunteers.<sup>65</sup> The Union's last call for draftees was made in December 1864. On 13 April 1865, the day before Lincoln's assassination, the Union stopped the draft and recruiting.

Lincoln's firm handling of the New York draft riots was the key event for the successful implementation of the draft during the remainder of the war. He knew when to hold back and when and how to apply pressure. By not committing large federal forces to New York City, he allowed mostly local authorities to put down the rioters and restore calm. The presence of large amounts of federal troops probably would have increased resentment of the federal government. The appointment of General Dix to resume the draft was brilliant. A native New Yorker and well known Democrat, he was not an outsider and was also certain to take a dim view of any attempts to repeat the rioting of July. His telegram to Halleck showed his determination to see the draft carried out.

Lincoln also dealt well with Governor Seymour. Although refusing to even consider suspending the draft in New York pending a Supreme Court hearing, he still allowed Seymour some measure of victory by temporarily lowering the quotas around New York City. This allowed Seymour to come away with some tangible victory for his constituents, however small.

Davis also achieved his goal of enlarging the Confederate Army, and under the considerable handicap of the Confederacy's commitment to states' rights. Additionally, the Confederacy lacked a Supreme Court, a necessary exemption in an government which considered states' rights more important than any federal laws. This meant Davis had no recourse if a state judged that conscription violated their rights. He told Governor Brown himself the states were the final judge of whether their rights had been infringed upon by the federal government. Davis was required to convince each state that conscription was a temporary necessity for the effective protection of the whole Confederacy. Working within this framework, he was still able to win enough people over to his view to carry out conscription in the South. The challenge from Governor Brown was serious, but Brown lacked strong popular support within his own state. Publishing his reply to Governor Brown as a pamphlet was an excellent way for Davis to appeal his own views to the people of the Confederacy, and allowed him to publicly dispute the arguments of his most vocal critic.

Conscription in the South raised more men as volunteers than actual conscripts. In a report to Davis in November 1863, Secretary of War Seddon told Davis that three men volunteered for every conscript.<sup>66</sup> This was true in Georgia as elsewhere in the Confederacy; so although Brown was able to limit the number of men drafted in his state, Davis still achieved his goal of enlarging the Confederate Army. Severely limited by the

Confederacy's commitment to states' rights, Davis was able to convince the people of the necessity of conscription. Despite the best efforts of of a small but powerful group of men, Davis prevailed and conscription continued until the end of the war.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Davis to Provisional Confederate Congress, 26 February 1861, Official Records, Series IV, vol. 1, 114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>4</sup>Walker to Pickens, 8 April 1861, Ibid., 211.

<sup>5</sup>Davis, Address to the Confederate Congress, 25 February 1862, Ibid., 951.

<sup>6</sup>Davis to Speaker of the House, 3 March 1862, Ibid., 969.

<sup>7</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 28 March 1892, Ibid., 1095.

<sup>8</sup>Brown to Davis, 22 April 1892, Ibid., 1082-85.

<sup>9</sup>Davis to Brown, 28 April 1862 Ibid., 1100.

<sup>10</sup>Brown to Davis, 8 May 1862, Ibid., 1116-20.

<sup>11</sup>Davis to Brown, 29 May 1862, Ibid., 1133.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1133-38.

<sup>13</sup>Brown to Randolph, 17 June 1862, Randolph to Brown, 17 June 1862, Ibid., 1154.

<sup>14</sup>Brown to Davis, 21 June 1862, Ibid., 1156-69.

<sup>15</sup>Davis to Brown, 10 July 1862, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 2, 2-3.

<sup>16</sup>Brown to Davis, 22 July 1862, Ibid., 10-13.

<sup>17</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 13 August 1862, Ibid., 54.

<sup>18</sup>Brown to Davis, 18 October 1862, Ibid., 128-31.

<sup>19</sup>Louise Biles, Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 85.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>21</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 2, 348.

<sup>22</sup>Biles, Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy, 89.

<sup>23</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 7 December 1863, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 2, 1040.

<sup>24</sup>Brown to Davis, 23 December 1863, Seddon to Davis 23 December 1863, Ibid., 1062-63

<sup>25</sup>Biles, Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy, 90.

<sup>26</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 20 February 1865, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 3, 796-98.

<sup>27</sup>Biles, Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy, 99.

<sup>28</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 20 February 1865, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 3, 1096.

<sup>29</sup>Davis to John Forsyth, 21 February 1865, Ibid., 1110.

<sup>30</sup>Davis to Confederate Congress, 13 March 1865, Ibid., 1133.

<sup>31</sup>Biles, Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy, 96.

<sup>32</sup>Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, IV:353-54.

<sup>33</sup>Lincoln to Congress, 4 July 1861, Ibid., 427-31.

<sup>34</sup>Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:296.

<sup>35</sup>An Act to Amend the Act Calling Forth the Militia to Execute the Laws of the Union, Suppress Insurrection, and Repel Invasion, Official Records ser. III, vol. 2, 280.

<sup>36</sup>Lincoln to Stanton, 22 July 1862, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, V:338.

<sup>37</sup>Official Records, ser. III, vol. 2, 586.

<sup>38</sup>James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 600.

<sup>39</sup>Fry to Stanton, May 1863, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 3, 180.

<sup>40</sup>Fry to Stanton, 2 May 1863, Ibid., 186.

<sup>41</sup>Lincoln to Seymour, 23 March 1863, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, VI:145.

<sup>42</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 14 April 1863, Ibid., 146.

<sup>43</sup>Iver Bernstein, The New York City Draft Riots (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 11.



<sup>44</sup>Opdyke to Stanton, 13 July 1863, Official Records, ser. I, vol. 27, pt. II, 913.

<sup>45</sup>Halleck to Seymour, 14 July 1863, Ibid., 914.

<sup>46</sup>Kirkwood to Stanton, 15 July 1863, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 3, 494.

<sup>47</sup>Stanton to Kirkwood, 17 July 1863, Ibid., 525.

<sup>48</sup>Bernstein, New York City Draft Riots, 62.

<sup>49</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 1 August 1863, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 3, 607.

<sup>50</sup>Lincoln to Seymour, 1 August 1863, Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 3 August 1863, Ibid., . 712-18.

<sup>52</sup>Lincoln to Seymour, 7 August 1863, Ibid., 635-36.

<sup>53</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 7 August 1863, Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 8 August 1863, Ibid., . 639-40.

<sup>55</sup>Phillip Van Doren Stern, ed., The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), 770-75.

<sup>56</sup>Lincoln to Seymour, 11 August 1863, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 3, 666-67.

<sup>57</sup>Dix to Seymour, 30 July 1863, Ibid., 592.

<sup>58</sup>Stanton to Dix, 15 August 1863, in Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, VI:390.

<sup>59</sup>Dix to Halleck, 16 August 1863, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 3, 699.

<sup>60</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 16 August 1863, Ibid., 681.

<sup>61</sup>Lincoln to Seymour, 16 August 1863, Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Dix to Halleck, 20 August 1863, Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Seymour to Lincoln, 21 August 1863, Ibid., 703.

<sup>64</sup>Seymour to Lincoln 22 August 1863, Ibid., 708.

<sup>65</sup>Fry to Stanton, 15 November 1864, Official Records, ser. III, vol. 4, 925-34.

<sup>66</sup>Seddon to Davis, Official Records, ser. IV, vol. 2, 995.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

The job of Commander in Chief during times of war is exceptionally difficult; leading the nation through Civil War was a monumental task. Both Lincoln and Davis led their governments through enormous military buildups and four hard years of war. When Davis was inaugurated, he had no standing military; by the end of the war, 800,000 men had served the Confederacy. Lincoln also saw his military grow; by war's end over 2,000,000 men had fought for the Union.<sup>1</sup> Add to this rapid expansion the problems of dealing with stubborn, sometimes insubordinate generals, and uncooperative governors and the enormity of the job becomes even more evident. Comparing the leadership and command methods they used to deal with these problems is worthwhile even today. Many of the same qualities that defined an effective Commander in Chief in the Civil War are still valid today, and many of the lessons they learned had a direct impact on the relationship between the military and its civilian leadership today.

A good example of a lesson learned in the Civil War that remains true is the perception that prior military and government experience is necessary for an effective Commander in Chief. While this may be desirable, it should not be the main discriminator when choosing a Commander in Chief as some believe even today. Davis was well educated, highly experienced in the federal government, and a leader of troops in combat. Davis's considerable skill in organization allowed the Confederacy

to field a military and defeat the initial Union attack at Bull Run, all in only five months. Davis also showed early in the war that he could be proud and stubborn, and exhibited these qualities throughout the war to the detriment of the Confederate war effort. Lincoln had none of Davis's formal qualifications, and was considered by many, even some of his own cabinet, to be well meaning but incompetent. Lincoln's talents were his understanding of people and his ability to see beyond the latest setback to his goal of restoring the Union. Lincoln had numerous setbacks during the first years of the war, but never considered anything less than restoration of the Union. His skill in influencing people allowed him to utilize the talents of people who disliked or disregarded him.

As Commanders in Chief, both men again exhibited different talents and flaws when dealing with their generals. Davis made the initial mistake of not having a General in Chief, but more than made up for that when he appointed Robert E. Lee to the job in early 1862. He and Lee worked very well together, but he "temporarily" put Lee in charge of the Army of Virginia in addition to his General in Chief duties. Lee remained in command of the army in his home state for the duration of the war. By putting his General in Chief in a field command, Davis lost his services as an impartial commander of the entire Army. He also attempted to take on those duties himself, and was unable to give the government and the military the time each required.

Lincoln's General in Chief woes are known well enough to be the subject of several books. Lincoln had four Generals in Chief and six commanders of the Army of the Potomac. He and Secretary of War Stanton also took a turn at the role of General in Chief, but abandoned that idea in a few months. Lincoln was constantly concerned with the safety of

Washington, and maintained direct command of the Army of the Potomac until just prior to Gettysburg in 1863. This was an inefficient command structure, with a field commander receiving orders from both the President and the General in Chief, and Lincoln should have fixed the problem sooner than he did. He did not completely trust a General in Chief to protect Washington until he appointed Grant in 1864. Even when Grant was in charge, Lincoln considered recalling him from the field to personally take command of the Washington defenses when Early made his raid in 1864, but Grant dissuaded him.

Both sides were forced to resort to conscription to keep their manning levels high enough to prosecute the war. This was new to America, and both Lincoln and Davis faced challenges from the states. Both men engaged in fairly protracted constitutional debates with a troublesome governor. Working with the handicap of the Confederacy's commitment to states' rights, Davis was still very effective in responding to Governor Brown of Georgia. Unlike Lincoln, Davis published his opinions of conscription in a pamphlet, taking his argument directly to the people of the Confederacy. Knowing he could not force Georgia to comply if their Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional, this method probably helped erode Brown's popular support in Georgia. By the time the Georgia Supreme Court ruled in favor of the law, Brown had lost support from both his legislature and the Court. Lincoln faced riots in New York, and his firm handling allowed the draft to continue in New York as well as the other states. Although he wrote a paper specifically outlining his opinions on the draft, he never published it. This suggests he wished to keep his distance from the unpopular law, much as his Provost-Marshal-General advised him to do with calls for new troops. Lincoln did, however,

show great political skill in his choice of General Dix to resume the draft in New York.

Each man had unique strengths and weaknesses, each was effective in certain capacities as Commander in Chief. Davis's initial achievements were impressive, however he was unable to continue this success over the course of the war. The Confederacy's victories in the first year of the war were due in large part to his organizational skills. The high point for the Confederate military effort was the fall of 1862, when Davis and Lee planned and executed a two pronged attack into Kentucky and Maryland. These campaigns were timed to influence the Union elections, and were brilliant and politically successful. Although Davis was never able to achieve this level of success again, he maintained the war effort for two and a half more years. Without him, the existence of the Confederacy would likely have been very much shorter.

Lincoln started slowly, but grew into the role of Commander in Chief. He persevered through the initial defeats, always keeping the goal of reunification in sight. This was one of the keys to his effectiveness; he never gave up. Lincoln himself said "I intend to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or I am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsakes me."<sup>2</sup> This vision and determination, combined with his ability to understand and influence people enabled him to persevere through defeats and personnel changes until he had a General in Chief he trusted completely. Once Grant arrived, Lincoln began to back out of the routine operations of the military. Realizing the end of the war was approaching, he began planning for the peace to follow. Lincoln's vision allowed him to shift his efforts to the impending post-war

difficulties rather than merely sit back and await them, a crucial quality in a Commander in Chief.

Both men have been extensively studied, and both exhibited qualities that are valuable today. Davis was effective in the initial stages, Lincoln survived early setbacks and allowed nothing to stand in the way of restoring the Union. Each side eventually adopted a strategy that reflected its leaders; the Confederacy tried in vain for the glorious, climactic battle that would end the war, the Union finally winning with slow, relentless advances. Both men struggled to hold together a coalition of states, and in doing so created the powerful type of federal government we have today. Because of the conflict these two men waged, the American government and military became what it is today.

Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>James M. McPherson, Ordeal By Fire vol. II, The Civil War, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1982), 181.

<sup>2</sup>A. K. McClure, Lincoln and Men of War Times J. Stuart Torrey, ed. (New York: Rolley and Reynolds, Inc., 1962), 168.

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